

**LATIN AMERICAN SOCIO-RELIGIOUS STUDIES PROGRAM
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**A BRIEF HISTORY OF
THE TWELVE LARGEST
PROTESTANT DENOMINATIONS IN
COSTA RICA, 1890-2000**

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In 1980-1981 the author returned to Pasadena, California, from his home and ministry in Costa Rica, where he had served as a missionary with the Latin America Mission since 1972, and began doctoral studies at the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary. His doctoral dissertation, written in English, was on "**A History of the Protestant Movement in Central America, 1880-1980.**" The present report is an update based on his chapter on Costa Rica, which originally only included historical profiles of Protestant denominations with more than 1,000 members in 1978.

In historical perspective, eleven church planting organizations initiated work in Costa Rica prior to 1940, eleven more in the period 1940-1960, and 20 between 1960 and 1980. Obviously, it was the latter period that witnessed the greatest amount of new activity among Protestant mission agencies and this contributed to accelerated church growth in Costa Rica, both numerically in terms church members and geographically in terms of the planting of new churches and missions throughout the country.

By 1978, the largest Protestant denominations in Costa Rica were the following in terms of the number of congregations (churches and missions) and the estimated communicant membership (Holland, 1981:50):

RANK	NAME OF DENOMINATION	DATE FOUNDED	NUMBER CONG.	NUMBER MEMBERS
1	SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH	1897	47	5,700
2	ASSEMBLIES OF GOD	1944	120	4,900
3	ASSOC. OF BIBLE CHURCHES (LAM)	1921	62	3,984
4	BIBLE BAPTIST CHURCHES	1958	7	2,950
5	FOURSQUARE CHURCH	1953	31	2,900
6	BAPTIST CONVENTION (SO. BAPT.)	1944	39	2,260
7	CHURCH OF GOD (CLEVELAND, TN)	1937	66	2,100
8	PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH	1896	17	2,049
9	CENTRAL AMERICAN CHURCHES (CAM)	1891	60	1,500
10	UNITED METHODIST CHURCH	1917	24	1,395
11	PENTECOSTAL CHURCH OF GOD	1970	14	1,200
12	PENTECOSTAL HOLINESS CHURCH	1918	26	1,100
	TOTALS		513	32,038

These 12 denominations had 71% of the total number of congregations (churches and missions) that were reported to exist in Costa Rica in 1978, and 72% of the total members reported.

In order to update the information on these denominations for the period 1980-2000, the author used a variety of sources, which are listed at the end of this study. In addition, a number of new denominations were added to the original study; either the new groups did not exist prior to 1980, or they were too small to be included in the original study because they had less than 1,000 baptized members at that time.

The intent of this brief historical survey is to provide the reader with basic information about the twelve largest Protestant denominations known to exist in Costa Rica as of March 2000, and to encourage others to expand these profiles and update them so that we all may have a more accurate picture of the origin, growth and development of the larger denominations in our midst. Also, it is important that we analyze the growth of these denominations in order to learn more about the way religious groups develop in the Costa Rican context. The growth of baptized members in each of these denominations is not the only valid measurement of "church growth," but it does provide us with one important criterion for doing a comparative analysis by decades to better understand the growth patterns of the major denominations.

Hopefully, we can learn some important lessons from this brief study that will help us in the process of strategic planning as we work to further the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Costa Rica in faithfulness to the Great Commission.

PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH (1896)

The Anglican Church was one of the first Protestant Churches to begin work in Central America and Panama (originally part of Colombia): the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist was established in Belize City in 1815, and the Cathedral of Christ-by-the-Sea was established in the Port of Colón, Colombia (now Panama) in 1857 (check date). However, Anglican chaplains had accompanied British ships to Central American ports-of-call since the 1740s, where several trading posts were established between 1750 and 1800. But it was not until the 1890s that Anglican missionary work began in Costa Rica, although an Anglican chapel had been constructed at Greytown, Nicaragua in the 1850s, at the mouth of the San Juan River that forms the natural border between Nicaragua and Costa Rica.

In 1896, Bishop Ormsby of the Diocese of British Honduras, visited Costa Rica and established Anglican worship in the country for the first time, according to Nelson (1963:78). Ormsby visited Port Limón and San José, where he was invited to send an Anglican priest to serve as pastor of the Church of the Good Shepherd -- an interdenominational congregation founded in San José in 1848 to serve the growing

Protestant community, largely composed of foreign residents -- and to send missionaries to Port Limón, where he found many West Indians of the Anglican Faith.

After Ormsby's return to Belize City, he arranged for the Rev. H. Alberto Ansell from Jamaica to relocate to Port Limón; Ansell arrived in Costa Rica in May of 1896 and established the Anglican Church in Limón, where Anglicanism prospered, according to Nelson (1963:79). On April 28, 1898, the foundation stone was laid for St. Marks Church in Limón, and the new building was dedicated on November 13 of that year. From Limón, Anglican work expanded among the settlements of West Indians along the Caribbean coast and along the railroad lines that had been built during the 1870s-1880s. The railroad was constructed under the supervision of two North American engineers, Henry Meiggs and Minor Keith, and was completed in December of 1890. After its completion, Keith and others formed the infamous United Fruit Company (referred to by Costa Ricans as "Mamita Uni") that developed the banana industry along the Caribbean coast, which required the importation of thousands of experienced banana workers from the English-speaking West Indies (former British colonies), many of whom were Anglicans, Baptists and Methodists.

Of the 15,118 Negroes in Costa Rica in 1950, about 91% of them were living along the Caribbean coast of the Province of Limón, where they formed about 33% of the population. This coastal area was a steaming jungle when the railroad was built and the Afro-Caribbean peoples arrived to clear the land, plant the care for the young banana stocks, and eventually harvest the crops and ship the fruit via the railroad to Port Limón for export to the USA and Europe. Before the arrival of modern sanitation, the region was rampant with malaria, yellow fever and backwater fever, which were deadly for most Europeans. However, many West Indian Negroes had developed immunities to these diseases and could survive in this damp, hot climate where bananas flourished.

Most of the Negroes living in Costa Rica in 1950 were descended from these West Indian immigrants who settled along the Caribbean coast, and many of their families were Anglicans, Baptists or Methodists when they arrived on these shores. The Jamaican Baptist Union began work in Limón in 1887 under the leadership of the Rev. Joshua Heath Sobey, a missionary with the Jamaican Baptist Missionary Society; the First Baptist Church was organized on December 2, 1888 with Sobey as its pastor. The Wesleyan Methodists from Panama sent the Rev. A. W. Geddes to Port Limón in 1894 to begin work among the West Indians; the first formal Methodist worship service was held at Cairo, a few miles north of Siquirres on August 20, 1894. After several years of slow beginnings, the Missionary Committee of the Panama Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church (British origins) sent the Rev. Edward Augustus Pitt to Costa Rica in December of 1896, where he remained as missionary pastor for more than 30 years. Also, the Salvation Army entered Costa Rica in 1907 from Panama and began work among the West Indians; the first two officers were Captain Palaci (a Peruvian) and

Lieutenant Stewart (a West Indian) who established themselves in Limón and began work along the Caribbean coast.

Anglican work in the Province of Limón suffered from numerous problems that were characteristic of that period of history: a migrant population, lack of education among the laity, lack of clergy and few financial resources. In 1947, Anglican work in Costa Rica was transferred from the Diocese of British Honduras to the jurisdiction of the American Episcopal Missionary District of the Panama Canal Zone in an effort to obtain more resources for the development of the work in Costa Rica. Although the Church of the Good Shepherd in San José had used an Anglican form of worship since 1896, the church government remained congregational (in keeping with its charter as an interdenominational church), with the church members holding title to the property. But, in 1947, the membership voted to formally affiliate with the Anglican Communion (called the Protestant Episcopal Church in the USA) and to transfer ownership of its property to Missionary District of Panama. In 1956, a new Diocese was created, composed of the five Central American countries (excluding British Honduras), under the jurisdiction of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the USA, with the Rt. Rev. David E. Richards as the first Bishop.

Following this transition, the Anglican-Episcopal Church of Costa Rica became more evangelistic and began to reach out to the Spanish-speaking population, mainly in the San José metropolitan area. Traditionally, Anglican work in Costa Rica had been among the English-speaking West Indians on the Caribbean coast and among the English-speaking American and European residents in San José at the Church of the Good Shepherd. In 1959, a Spanish-speaking church was organized in Barrio Cuba, San José, and in 1960 another congregation was established in the suburb of Guadalupe.

As a consequence of these new efforts, the Anglican-Episcopal membership in Costa Rica increased from 956 in 1947 to 1,950 in 1960 (Nelson, 1963:219). By 1978, there were 17 churches and missions with about 2,150 members and 4,200 adherents (Holland, 1981:50). Between 1960 and 1980, the total number of churches and the total membership remained about the same: the denomination was obviously in a holding pattern. Since 1980, the overall church membership has declined, probably due to the demise of the older West Indian constituency and a failure to attract the younger generation. In 1986, church officials reported 14 churches and four missions (18 congregations) with only about 900 members. In March of 2000, there were 17 congregations with about 650 members within the three districts: Limón (7), Siquirres (6) and San José (4).

In 1968, the Diocese of Central America was divided into separate jurisdictions for each country, thereby forming the Diocese of Costa Rica. Its first Bishop was the Rt. Rev. José Antonio Ramos (Puerto Rican). In 1973, this denomination became incorporated in Costa Rica as "Asociación Misionera de la Iglesia Episcopal Costarricense" (Missionary

Association of the Costa Rican Episcopal Church). Currently, the Bishop of Costa Rica is the Rt. Rev. Cornelius Joshua Wilson (a Costa Rican of West Indian descent).

CENTRAL AMERICA MISSION (1891)

The first Protestant missionary work among the Spanish-speaking population was begun by the Central American Mission (CAM). The CAM's first missionaries were Mr. and Mrs. William Connell, who arrived in Costa Rica in 1891. Their initial ministry in San José was in English, but Spanish-speaking work was soon launched at the urging of Francisco Penzotti of the American Bible Society. This was a serious step to take because of the popular idea that Protestantism was alright for Anglo Americans and West Indians (Afro-Caribbean people from the British West Indies), but not for Hispanic Americans. The McConnells were aided by the arrival of three new missionaries in 1893 and five more in 1895.

From the outset, the emphasis of the CAM was on widespread evangelism rather than on church planting. Mission workers preached and distributed Bibles throughout the Central Valley and along the Atlantic coast. Meetings were held in private homes, and it wasn't until 1902 that the first chapel was built. During the early years, the CAM work weathered severe attacks from without by the Roman Catholic clergy and by popular fanaticism. From within, under the leadership of Francis Boyle (1912-1920), the work was divided and frustrated over the issue of hyper-dispensationalism.

These factors help to explain why church growth was slow. From 190 baptized believers in 1900, the CAM work grew to 721 members in 1919, with eight organized congregations in five provinces. However, by 1921, few CAM missionaries remained in Costa Rica, and the work, in general, had deteriorated. Only five congregations remained, and all but two national workers had abandoned the Missions.

Another twenty years passed with very little growth; only 300 members were reported in 1937. It was not until the 1940s and 1950s that a new group of missionaries, together with national pastors and workers, brought about an extension and consolidation of CAM work in Costa Rica. The churches founded by the CAM were organized as the Association of Central American Evangelical Churches, becoming autonomous in 1948 and almost entirely self-supporting by 1956. Not until the 1940s, under the leadership of William Taylor, were national workers ordained as pastors and sufficient emphasis given to formal training for Christian work. Church membership increased from 260 in 1935, to 650 in 1955, and by 1960 had reached 1,064. By the latter date, twenty-seven organized churches had been established, each with an Hispanic pastor, in addition to thirty-nine "congregations" (equivalent to "missions" in the vocabulary of other denominations), and with 4,200 reported adherents. Due to strict membership requirements, there were only about 1,000 communicant members out of the larger number of adherents.

Whereas the period 1940-1960 was one of slow but sustained growth, between 1960 and 1980 the number of churches and members remained about the same. In 1978, the CAM reported 30 churches and 1,117 communicant members, or about the same number as in 1967 (1,123) or in 1960 (1,064).

According to the CAM missionary James Paul:

Since 1960, the work has been characterized by the principle of "holding the fort". Internal problems have retarded growth and an exodus of membership to new and more aggressive groups has taken place. From without, the Association has been affected by strange doctrines, by forms of both national and international ecumenicalism, by the tongues movement, by liberation theology, and by the normal process of change within Costa Rican society. A defensive stance has tended to dampen the joy, the freedom, and the aggressive extension of the work. (CAM BULLETIN, November-December 1977, page 11)

CAM missionary Sigifredo Bieske reported that, on the Pacific coast, the CAM lost 10 out of a total of 15 congregations to the Pentecostals during the 1970s and 1980s (Bieske, 1990:13). Bieske characterized the period 1960-1980 in CAM history as conservative, conformist and lacking dynamism.

However, between 1980 and 1990, the CAM experienced something of a revitalization, after coming to the realization of some of their shortcomings in a pastoral retreat in 1978. After the late 1970s, some of the older, conservative pastors retired or passed away, while the number of CAM missionaries increased, mainly young couples from the USA (some were reassigned from Nicaragua after the Sandinistas won the civil war against the Somoza dictatorship in 1979), as well as the arrival of new national pastors from other countries, mainly Guatemala and Nicaragua. Also, there was a change in the evangelistic strategy of the CAM, from planting churches in small towns in rural areas to concentrating on church planting in the growing urban areas of Costa Rica.

Consequently, the work of the CAM in Costa Rica began to show signs of renewal and growth for the first time in several decades. During 1979 alone, the CAM started 10 new congregations in the San José Metropolitan Area, which at that time had a population of about 850,000 people. By 1986, the total CAM membership had grown to about 2,900, or more than double what it was in 1978 (1,122); the total Sunday school attendance in 1986 was about 4,400 among the 50 churches and 14 missions ("missions" are called "congregations" by the CAM). By 1989, there were 72 churches and missions with a total membership of about 3,420.

However, during the decade of the 1990s, the number of churches and members remained about the same. In March 2000, the CAM reported a total of 69 churches and missions with about 3,500 members and 5,900 adherents.

THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH (1897)

Seventh-Day Adventism began in Costa Rica during the 1890s among the English-speaking West Indian immigrants on the Caribbean coast. Adventist missionaries, based in the Bay Islands of Honduras, visited many ports of the Caribbean aboard their missionary schooner "The Herald" during the 1890s, arriving in Port Limón in 1897. Apparently, Elder F. J. Hutchins was the first Adventist to preach and teach in Port Limón, and he was followed by I. G. Knight. By 1903, two Adventist chapels had been established in Costa Rica at Limón and Pacuarito under the supervision of H. Louie Mignott and C. N. Moulton. By 1906, the first Adventist evangelistic efforts had been held in San José by T. M. Brown.

After the headquarters of the West Indian Union Conference was transferred from Kingston, Jamaica to Colón, Panama in 1908, Costa Rica and other Central American countries began to receive greater attention by Adventist missionaries. In 1921, the Adventists established a primary school in Port Limón. However, early efforts to reach the Spanish-speaking population were sporadic and not very successful. It was not until 1927 that the Adventist Mission of Costa Rica-Nicaragua was formally established, with four organized churches and 148 members in Costa Rica. By 1935, there were seven churches with 322 members, predominantly among the English-speaking West Indians on the Caribbean coast.

Although the Seventh-Day Adventist Church grew slowly in Costa Rica prior to 1950, since that time it has become one of the largest Protestant denominations in the nation. By 1955 there were 24 congregations (churches and "groups" or missions) with about 1,450 members. In 1978, 41 congregations and about 5,700 members were reported, and in 1986 there were 46 organized churches and 66 missions (total congregations = 112) with 9,444 members. Prior to 1960, the majority of the Adventist church members were English-speaking West Indian Negroes, but since then a growing number have been Spanish-speaking Mestizos. By 1980, the Adventists comprised about 12% of the total Protestant population of Costa Rica and was the largest Protestant denomination in the country (Holland, 1981:50).

Although the Adventists are classified as "Protestants," they are not necessarily known to be "Evangelicals," due to their own exclusiveness as a religious group and to certain doctrinal differences (particularly, honoring the Sabbath and emphasis on certain Old Testament regulations and Bible Prophecy) that have caused many Evangelicals to consider them to be distant cousins at best (see Nelson, 1983:295). The Adventists have always placed strong emphasis on both the mind and body: teaching morality (abstinence = against the use of alcoholic beverages and tobacco) and Bible prophecy (especially regarding the Second Advent = the return of Jesus Christ to establish his earthly kingdom), and emphasizing good physical health (natural health foods and vegetarianism). This historical separation between Adventists and Evangelicals

(including Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals) in Costa Rica, and generally throughout the Americas, has been a mutual rejection of one another. Prior to the 1950s, this mutual antagonism was very strong, but since that time there has been greater tolerance and growing mutual understanding between the various Protestant traditions.

One of the significant contributions that the Adventists have made to education in Costa Rica was the founding of the "Colegio Adventista" (primary and secondary levels) in 1927. Although the school was originally founded in Las Cascadas, Panama, in 1925, it was relocated to San José in 1927, then to a site near Tres Ríos in 1932, and finally to its present location at La Ceiba, near the City of Alajuela, in 1950. By 1972, the name of the school was changed to "Centro Adventista de Estudios Superiores" (Adventist Center of Higher Education), and it offered courses that were the equivalent of what the Evangelicals were providing at the Bible institute level. However, since this type and level of instruction was not accredited by the government of Costa Rica, the Adventists began to upgrade their program so that it was able to satisfy the government's requirements to become a private university in 1986. With approval from the government's Council of Higher Education (CONESUP), the Adventists changed the name of this institution to the Adventist University of Central America (UNADECA).

This was the first "Protestant" educational institution in Costa Rica to achieve official "university" status, and it paved the way for two Evangelical programs of theological education to also become private universities in the 1990s: the Nazarene University of the Americas (formerly, the Nazarene Seminary of the Americas) and the Latin American Biblical University (formerly, the Latin American Biblical Seminary).

At the end of 1995, the Adventists reported a total membership of 20,274, and the 1999 annual report (December 31, 1999) shows the following: 85 churches, 47 missions (132 congregations) and 31,350 members, 90% of which are Spanish-speaking Costa Ricans, 10% are English-speaking West Indians, about 5% are Spanish-speaking Nicaraguan immigrants, and about 5% are Bribri-speaking Native American Indians. This religious group is the 2nd largest Protestant denomination in Costa Rica.

The Adventists also operate six primary schools and three secondary schools ("colegios") throughout the country. At the UNADECA campus at La Ceiba, near Alajuela, this denomination operates the Adventist World Radio (short-wave), which covers the Americas, as well as a local radio station (Radio Lira) that covers about 80% of Costa Rican territory. In addition, at least 29 Adventist pastors and lay workers from Costa Rica are serving in other countries, including 11 in the USA and 13 in other Central American countries.

METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH (1917)

The Methodist Episcopal Board of Foreign Missions began work in Costa Rica in 1917, with the arrival of George Amos Miller from Panama and Eduardo Zapata from Mexico. Although Miller returned to Panama, Zapata remained in Costa Rica and began missionary work. That year, the first Methodist congregation was founded in the home of Modesto Le Roy in San José, which later became the "Church of the Redeemer" in 1919. Zapata labored in Costa Rica until mid-1918, when he was replaced by the Rev. Sidney Edwards of Puerto Rico. During his second visit to Costa Rica, in 1919, Miller (with funds from the Mission Board) purchased a piece of property on Avenida Central in San José that formerly housed the Club Catalán, which was converted into the first Methodist church building in the Central Valley. Later, it was on this property that the new Church of the Redeemer was built and dedicated in 1925, under the pastorate of the Rev. Carlos Alpízar.

Under the bishopric of W. P. Thirkfield from 1920-1924, new missionaries arrived and new centers were opened. During the 1920s, new churches were founded in the San José metropolitan area (Barrio México and Guadalupe) and in other communities of the Central Valley (such as Cartago and Alajuela). During the 1930s, work was begun in the southwestern coastal plain (Puntarenas Province) where the United Fruit Company was developing new banana plantations (Golfito, Sierpe and Puerto Cortés). However, by 1937, only 262 "members in good standing" were reported in Costa Rica by Church officials. According to Costa Rica Church historian Wilton Nelson:

The weakness of the Methodists seems to have been the opposite of that of the Central American Mission. The latter did widespread evangelism without proper church organization. The former had highly developed organization but lacked evangelistic zeal. About 1934 a change took place and an interest in evangelism began to manifest itself among the Methodists and resulted in expansion into new areas. (Nelson, 1963:165)

In 1937, the Methodists appointed the first two Costa Ricans as pastors. Nelson states that "the development of national workers and leaders was much slower than in the Central American Mission" (1963:167). In 1944, for the first time, a national was named as superintendent of the Costa Rican District of the "Central American Mission Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church," which included the districts of Costa Rica and Panama. The Methodists were also slow in developing self-supporting churches, since it was not until 1954 that the first church in the district achieved this goal.

During the 1950s, new churches were established in Concepción de Alajuelita and Hatillo by Juan Sosa and Marion Woods, and in San Juan de Tibás, San Sebastián and San Pedro, all of which are in the San José metropolitan area. In addition, Methodist

work continued to grow in the "southern banana zone" of Puntarenas Province, where new churches were planted in Palmar Sur, Villa Briceño, Pueblo Nuevo de Coto, Pueblo Civil de Golfito, Buenos Aires, Piedras Blancas, Maiz, Camíbar, Kilómetro 31, Ollacero, Villa Neilly, Coto 47 and Río Claro. In 1962, a Methodist church was also established in San Isidro de El General (San José Province), in the southern region.

Although most of the members of these new churches were employees of banana and African Palm oil plantations, many of the workers were migratory and did not remain for long in the hot, coastal plains. There was a seasonal migration of farm workers between the banana-growing areas in the lowlands and the coffee-growing areas in the highlands. Many of those who were converted in Methodist congregations in the southern banana zone eventually migrated to other parts of the country, where there were no Methodist churches, and became members of other denominations.

Methodists have always stressed the social implications of the Gospel, and Methodism in Costa Rica is no exception to the rule. In the first Annual Conference, social service and temperance committees were established. Boy Scout troops and Camp Fire Girl groups were developed in 1923. Since 1921, the Methodist School (bilingual in English-Spanish) in San Pedro has provided quality primary and secondary education for middle and upper class students, who have later become part of the new generation of leaders within Costa Rican society. Many parents who would not darken the door of an Evangelical church sent their children to this school, thereby removing prejudice and creating a good public image for the growing evangelical community. In 1953, an agricultural project was initiated in San Carlos, known as the Methodist Rural Center.

The Central America Conference of the Methodist Church established, in Alajuela, a "School for the Preparation of Methodist Workers," beginning in 1957 with twelve students from Costa Rica and Panama. This school was operated until the late 1960s, and the facilities are still used as a retreat and training center for the Methodists and other groups. More recently, the denomination has reestablished a school for training pastors and lay workers: the Evangelical Methodist Seminary (Bible institute level) was founded at the Alajuela facility in 1990.

Although church growth among the Methodists has been rather slow, the work has been notably well organized. From the first Conference report in 1920, when 49 communicant members were reported, the Methodists grew to 262 in 1937, 633 in 1955, and by 1960 numbered 865. Only 88 members were added by 1967 (953), and only 1,135 members were reported in 1978. In 1967, 19 churches were reported to exist. Between 1967 and 1978, the Methodists had an annual growth rate of only 1.8%, which is less than the natural population increase of 3.5%.

There is evidence of more substantial growth during the 1980s-1990s. By 1983 there were 1,266 members, and by 1986 the membership had increased to 1,378 among 20

churches and seven missions (23 congregations). However, by 1989, the Methodist Church reported 25 churches and 23 missions (48 congregations), with about 1,568 members. In March 2000, there were 50 congregations and missions with about 5,000 adherents (no official membership data was reported).

A number of tensions among the Methodists in Costa Rica, as well as among other denominations, have led to conflicts between those who have favored Liberation Theology and those who have opposed it, between those caught up in the Charismatic Movement and those who oppose the Pentecostalization of their churches, between traditional Liberals and Conservatives, etc. During the 1980s, several pastors who supported Liberation Theology left the Methodist Church due to conflicts with their more conservative brethren. In 1989, a Methodist pastor in Heredia left the Methodist Conference of Costa Rica (affiliated with the United Methodist Church in the USA) and became affiliated with the Free Methodist Church of North America; during the 1990s, four other churches were founded by, or became affiliated with, the Free Methodist Church in Costa Rica.

The Methodist Conference of Costa Rica has actively participated in the Evangelical Alliance of Costa Rica (EACR), which includes about 100 members (denominations, independent churches and service agencies). For many years, Methodist Bishop Fernando Palomo has served as President of the EACR Board of Directors and has had an active role in promoting cooperation and unity among Evangelicals. The EACR is involved in a variety of activities, such as responding to emergency situations (specifically, natural disasters), coordinating inter-denominational events and programs (20 EACR commissions exist at the national level), and representing the Evangelical Community before government authorities.

PENTECOSTAL HOLINESS CHURCH (1918)

The first Pentecostal missionaries to arrive in Costa Rica were Mr. and Mrs. James Hare, affiliated with the Pentecostal Holiness Association (PHA), according to Nelson (1983:270), although they only remained for a few months during 1918. However, in 1926, the Hares returned and established their first church in Cartago.

Two additional Pentecostal missionaries arrived during the 1930s. Carrie Zeisloft came to Costa Rica in 1930 and served as pastor of the Cartago congregation for eight years; it is not known how long the Hares remained in Costa Rica, but in the mid-1930s they apparently were working with a few small churches in northern Guatemala (Pruitte, no date, page 4). Encouraged by the Hares, Amos Bradley arrived in Costa Rica in 1936, affiliated with the PHA, after having served as an independent missionary in Guatemala and El Salvador since 1908.

Apparently, Bradley and Zeisloft decided to work independently of each other, she in Cartago and he in San José. According to Nelson, Bradley formed a few unstable congregations in the San José area during the 1940s (Nelson 1983:270-271). According to Pruitte, these small congregations were located in the provinces of San José (Cinco Esquinas de Tibás, Barrio Cuba, Plaza Víques, Desamparados and Santa Ana) and Heredia, and Bradley was assisted by a “native worker,” don Víctor Ramos (Pruitte, no date, page 4). Because of an illness, Mrs. Bradley remained in the USA during most of Amos’ ministry in Costa Rica.

In 1950, Bradley rejoined the Pentecostal Holiness Church (PHC) in the USA (he had been affiliated with the PHC from 1912 to 1919) and requested that the Mission Board of PHC, a different group than the Pentecostal Holiness Association, take over his mission work in Costa Rica, probably due to a lack of support from the PHA. After considering this request, the PHC responded affirmatively and sent the Rev. John Parker to Costa Rica in 1951. At that time, Bradley was the supervisor of two organized churches (with two parsonages) and seven “preaching points.” Parker, who was appointed the field superintendent after Bradley died in 1955, had some success during those first, difficult years; the work grew from a total of 44 church members in 1952 to 180 in 1960, and reached 1,104 in 1974.

Mrs. Charlene West (her husband was deceased) and her family arrived in Costa Rica about 1974 and replaced Parker as superintendent. By 1978, there were only 26 churches with about 1,100 members (Holland, 1981:50), and a Bible Institute had been established in Santa Ana, located in the Central Valley to the west of the capital city. In March 2000, the PHC reported a total of 76 churches in Costa Rica with about 3,800 members. However, little information has been written about the historical development of these churches.

LATIN AMERICA MISSION (1921)

The interdenominational Latin America Evangelization Campaign, later known as the Latin America Mission (LAM), entered Costa Rica in 1921, under the leadership of the Rev. and Mrs. Harry Strachan. The mission began as a promoter of evangelistic campaigns throughout Latin America, and soon came to have a major role in pulling the evangelical movement in Costa Rica out of its impasse and stagnation. This was accomplished by means of local evangelistic campaigns and the cooperative institutional efforts promoted by the Strachans.

Harry and Susan Strachan, who had served in Argentina under the Regions Beyond Missionary Union, established the headquarters of their new mission in San José for the express purpose of engaging in: (1) Systematic evangelistic campaigns in the larger cities and towns of Latin America, to be held in tents, theatres, halls, or in the open air, to attract people who would normally not come to a building associated with religious

services; (2) Itinerant evangelization to be carried out simultaneously, covering the district surrounding the center where the campaign is held; (3) Training of native workers (Nelson, 1962:175). Some of the best evangelists of Latin America were recruited as preachers for the campaigns that were carried out between 1921 and 1934 in Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain and Morocco. According to Nelson, "These campaigns may well have constituted one of the factors that pulled the Evangelical Movement in all Latin America out of its decades of doldrums and started it on its modern period of phenomenal growth" (1962:176).

Such campaigns were held in Costa Rica with Juan Varetto in 1922 and with Angel Archilla Cabrera in 1927. During the first campaign, there was no organized opposition, and people from all social classes packed out the largest theatre in San José. But the second campaign in 1927 provoked a great religious controversy, with public defamation of Protestants by Catholic priests through articles in local newspapers and printed handbills. However, this seemed to encourage people to attend the meetings held in a San José lumberyard, where 1,400 overflowed the meeting place. The Archilla campaign contributed greatly to the advancement of the evangelical movement in Costa Rica, because sympathy for the evangelical cause had been created, and hundreds had been converted. New converts were so numerous that the existing churches could not care for them, which motivated the Strachans to build a large tabernacle-like structure in 1929, seating 1,000. This was the origin of the Bible Temple in San José that served as an "evangelistic center" for the extension of the work in the capital and to outlying areas.

Before coming to Costa Rica, the Strachans had traveled throughout Latin America in 1920 to survey the status of evangelical work. One of their conclusions was that Bible institutes and seminaries were few in Latin America, and that an urgent need existed to train national workers. During the campaigns, this need was met by holding short-term Bible institutes in the mornings, concurrently with the evangelistic meetings in the evenings. They also established a Women's Bible Training School in the Strachan home, beginning in 1923 with eight students. In 1924, when a two-story structure was built for the Training School, Harry Strachan brought down eight young men from Nicaragua and converted the school into a "Bible Institute". By 1925 the Institute was functioning with 19 students and a faculty composed of missionaries of the Central American Mission, the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Latin America Evangelistic Campaign. This interdenominational Institute met a long-felt need and was well received in evangelical circles, resulting in many Missions deciding to send students to the school. In 1930, there were forty students, representing eleven countries and eight denominations or missions. The name was changed to the "Latin America Biblical Seminary" in 1941, when its academic standards were raised to meet the growing needs of the evangelical movement.

Other ministries were created by the Latin America Evangelization Crusade to further the Lord's work in Costa Rica and Latin America. In 1926, a Spanish literature ministry was initiated that grew to become the Editorial Caribe/LAMP (Latin America Mission Publications) in 1948, now one of the most important publishers and distributors of evangelical literature in Latin America. By 1961 LAMP bookstores had been formed in Port Limón, Panama City and New York City, in addition to the original bookstore founded in San José in 1953. Editorial Caribe continued to expand and increase its effectiveness; however, its offices were moved to Miami in 1970 to better serve the growing literature market throughout Latin America.

The Bible Clinic (now, Hospital Clínica Bíblica) was constructed in 1929 to care for believers who needed hospitalization, since prejudice was so strong against evangelicals that they were sometimes refused entrance to government hospitals or, once interned, were neglected. Although Costa Rica was becoming more liberal, fanaticism still persisted in many of the state and Catholic institutions. In addition, loving care of the sick and helpless in an evangelical hospital resulted, both directly and indirectly, in winning many to the Lord and improving the public image of the evangelical movement in Costa Rica. The Bible Clinic grew out of a small nursing school that was established by the Mission in 1928, under the direction of missionary and national nurses. Many leading Costa Rican doctors have practiced medicine at the Bible Clinic, including a growing number of Protestant doctors who are Costa Ricans. A new hospital building was added to the older facilities in 1975, which doubled the capacity to over 60 beds. Since 1968, the hospital has been entirely under national management.

Susan Strachan had a great concern for sick and homeless children, and in 1931, when a two-hundred acre dairy and coffee farm was purchased by the Mission, her dreams were fulfilled by the establishment of an evangelical orphanage, called the Bible Home, in San José de la Montaña. Hundreds of orphaned and abandoned Costa Rican children have been cared for by the Bible Home, some of whom have become outstanding evangelical leaders. In 1947, a camping ministry was added to the work of the LAM, utilizing part of the Mission farm. Camp Roblealto thus became one of the earliest such camping ministries in all of Latin America.

The decade of the 1940s brought many changes to the Latin America Evangelistic Crusade. In 1941, the name was changed to "The Latin America Mission" (LAM) to reflect the expanding interests and ministries of the Mission. With the death of Harry Strachan in 1945, his son, Kenneth, became co-director of the LAM along with his mother, Susan. When Mrs. Strachan passed away in 1950, Kenneth became the General Director.

The 1940s also brought the organization of the Association of Bible Churches (AIBC), which grew out of the LAM's evangelistic work. Although it was not the Strachan's intention to plant churches, the expansion occurred naturally resulting from

evangelistic work by students and faculty of the Bible Institute and from evangelistic campaigns sponsored by the Mission. During the 1920s and 1930s, local congregations were formed in the Central Valley and in the northwestern coastal province of Guanacaste. The Bible Temple in San José remained the center of these efforts, with the distinction of being the largest evangelical church in the country until the 1980s.

In 1945, the AIBC was formed with 14 churches and 406 baptized members, however, the number of adherents was considerably larger. The LAM, during its early years of evangelistic enthusiasm, did not adequately follow-up and consolidate the gains made in evangelism by organizing new believers into local congregations. This lack of proper ecclesiastical organization was a common defect of independent missions, such as the CAM and the LAM, and stemmed from an inadequate concept of the importance of the local church.

The first LAM missionary to see this weakness was Kenneth Strachan, who initiated the preliminary steps that led to the formation of the AIBC in the mid-1940s. However, many of the founding congregations of the AIBC had only been organized locally the year before, when the first Latin pastors were ordained. By 1959, much progress had been made toward self support among the Bible Church Association.

In 1960, the AIBC had 13 churches, 18 missions and 37 preaching points, with a total membership of 1,055. During the 1950s, a large number of rapidly growing missions, mostly daughter-congregations of the Bible Temple, had been planted in the San José area, many of which later became flourishing churches.

By 1967, the membership of the AIBC had grown to 1,574, in 1974 to 3,470 and by 1978 had reached 3,984 with 44 churches, 18 missions and at least 34 preaching points. The annual membership increase between 1967 and 1978 was 9.7% (AAGR). Most of these congregations were located in the Central Valley and in the provinces of Guanacaste and Alajuela (especially in the San Carlos plains).

Beginning in the early 1970s, the AIBC began to experience the impact of the growing Charismatic Movement in North and South America, which resulted in the Pentecostalization of the many of the AIBC congregations throughout Costa Rica. The Bible Temple was the first AIBC church to hear testimonies in the pulpit from Charismatic leaders, both Protestants and Catholics, from the USA and Argentina regarding the "New Pentecostal Revival" that was spreading around the world. During the 1970s, the Renewal Movement, as it was called in Costa Rica, had a large impact on many non-Pentecostal denominations, like the AIBC, the Methodist Church, the Baptist Convention and other groups. While many local congregations began to exhibit Neo-Pentecostal tendencies, others rejected these influences and became strongly anti-Charismatic. For years many AIBC congregations struggled over this issue: some experienced conflicts and divisions and lost members to other churches, while others

were unified and prospered. By and large, the AIBC became identified with the Neo-Pentecostal Movement by the late 1970s.

However, during the 1970s and 1980s, other conflicts emerged that caused serious damage to people and organizations and led to the first real schism within the ranks of the AIBC. Liberation Theology (LT) became a controversial issue in the mid-1970s among evangelicals in general and, in particular, among the faculty and students of the Latin American Biblical Seminary (LABS) in San José, a school founded by the LAM in the 1920s that trained pastors and Christian leaders from many denominations and not just from the AIBC. The pro-LT and anti-LT factions waged verbal warfare against each other, with the result that many individuals were slandered and many Evangelical organizations were divided over this issue, including missionaries of the LAM and of other mission agencies.

By the late-1970s, a number of professors had resigned from the LABS who were opposed to, or not comfortable with, the teaching of LT, which left the majority of the remaining professors united and supportive of LT. At the same time, many denominations in Costa Rica that were opposed to LT, as well as national churches and mission agencies in other countries, stopped sending their leaders to the LABS.

This controversy also affected the AIBC as several of the LABS professors were also pastors in AIBC churches, and the issue of LT was hotly debated within the leadership of the AIBC for several years. Finally, in 1985, a group of five pastors and their churches withdrew from the AIBC and founded a new association of churches: the Costa Rican Federation of Evangelical Churches (FIEC, in Spanish). The FIEC is now affiliated with the Presbyterian Church in the USA, and has also become a member of the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI, in Spanish) and the Association of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches in Latin America (AIPRAL, in Spanish). At the end of 1988, FIEC reported nine churches and one mission, with a total of about 400 members. In March 2000, there were 24 churches with about 1,700 members affiliated with FIEC.

Meanwhile, in 1983, the AIBC reported 52 churches and 18 missions in Costa Rica, with about 5,700 baptized members; and, in 1989, the total membership was about 6,000 in 70 congregations. In 1989, there were 109 congregations (75 churches and 34 missions) with about 9,350 members. In March 2000, the AIBC reported 134 congregations (churches and missions) with 8,772 members.

CHURCH OF GOD - CLEVELAND, TN (1937)

The Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee) began work in Limón in 1937, when a small English-speaking independent congregation was taken under its care. No other work was begun for 13 years. In 1950, Noel de Sousa, a young, bilingual Panamanian missionary arrived to develop the work. The first Spanish-speaking church was

organized in San José in 1951, and by 1955 four churches with 281 members were reported. However, Nelson states that "during its first years this group was notorious for its proselytizing activities and an extreme form of Pentecostalism" (1962:224). Noel de Sousa was reportedly arrested some 40 times because of his preaching in public places. This "scandalous behavior" did not enjoy the respect of other evangelical groups, and even fellow Pentecostals protested. This situation led to the formation of a number of splinter groups.

However, with the arrival from Guatemala of the Rev. Jaime Aldama in 1959, this movement took on a more serious character. Under Aldama's leadership, the Church of God became more identified with the evangelical movement in Costa Rica, especially after their participation in the 1960-61 Evangelism-in-Depth campaign. The work expanded to include 14 congregations with 835 members in 1967, with over 2,000 reportedly attending Sunday school. In 1974, the membership totaled 1,235 and by 1978 had increased to 2,100 distributed among 48 organized churches and 17 missions. Between 1967 and 1978, the total membership grew 9.7% per year. The main San José church is located in Barrio Cristo Rey, where the Church of God Bible Institute is also operated.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the Church of God continued to expand geographically, as well as experiencing an increase in the total number of churches and membership. By 1983, there were 236 churches with about 9,145 members; by 1986, there were 324 churches and about 12,700 members. However, in 1989, denomination officials reported only 301 churches but with 13,500 members. In March 2000, the Church of God (Cleveland, TN) reported 19,000 members and 380 churches in Costa Rica, which made it the 3rd largest Protestant denomination in Costa Rica.

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD (1942)

The largest Protestant denomination in Costa Rica today, the Assemblies of God, was established by the Rev. and Mrs. Lawrence Perrault in 1942. By 1944, several missions had been established in San José, Alajuela and Puntarenas. The Assemblies of God workers also experienced some difficulties during these early years, mainly due to the novelty of Pentecostalism in Costa Rica but also due in part to the attitudes and policies of their missionaries. Some of the first national workers were pastors who had served with other Missions, but who were recruited by the Assemblies of God after professing the Pentecostal experience. However, this initial period of non-cordial relationships was soon overcome when Perrault left and Arthur Bauer took his place. The latter demonstrated a friendly and cooperative spirit, which has been true of most of the missionaries who have arrived since Brauer. When the Evangelical Alliance was formed in 1950, the Assemblies of God was a charter member.

In 1945, the Assemblies expanded their work to the town of San Isidro de El General, an important market center located on the Pan-American Highway to the south of San José. This led to the development of the work in the large southwestern sector of Costa Rica, an agriculturally rich area that was attracting many colonists, including a group of Italians that settled near San Vito. This region was practically untouched by other Protestant groups, except for the Methodists. Here, the Assemblies found a large field for evangelism and church planting. By 1956, eleven churches had been formed in this region, mainly cared for by new workers that had been trained in the new Bible institute in San José.

During the period 1946 to 1952, very little progress had been made in opening new work by the Assemblies of God in Costa Rica. This was mainly due to a lack of national workers, which kept missionaries tied down to pastoral responsibilities. However, by 1950, a national pastor was appointed to the main church in San José, and two years later the same occurred in Alajuela, which freed missionaries to develop work in new fields. The establishment in 1953 of a Bible institute in San José, under the direction of David Kensinger, led to the development of trained national pastors and provided new workers for church expansion in the southwest region.

Between 1953 and 1980, the Assemblies of God grew to become the largest Pentecostal denomination in Costa Rica, and the second largest Protestant denomination after the Adventists. From 189 baptized believers in 1953, the work grew to 556 members in 1960, and by 1967 a total membership of 846 was reported. Between 1967 and 1978, membership grew 19.2% per year, which was the highest rate of growth among the larger denominations. Membership more than doubled between 1974 and 1978, from 2,128 to 4,492, with 120 congregations in existence by 1978.

Much of this recent growth has been due to concentrated evangelistic efforts since 1970 in the San José area and throughout the Central Valley, which have met with considerable success. Several large new churches, like those in Desamparados and Moravia, have been planted after a year of conducting an extended evangelistic campaign with wide publicity from radio, TV, and newspaper advertisements. Thousands were drawn to the meetings by a strong emphasis on divine healing, and hundreds stayed on to become founding members of the new churches. Special training sessions were held for new converts before the evening evangelistic services, and new leaders were prepared to teach Sunday school classes and to shepherd the new congregations. In 1980 one of San José's largest churches, the Gran Campaña de Desamparados reported over 500 baptized members, and with 800 to 1,000 in attendance. Many new churches and missions have been started by means of these extended evangelistic campaigns throughout Costa Rica, combined with the zeal of young, new pastors from the Bible Institute in Moravia.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the growth of the Assemblies of God in Costa Rica was even more spectacular. By 1983, the total membership was reported to be 11,691 (about 300 congregations); by 1986, it had increased to about 18,000 (about 325 congregations). However, in 1989, denominational officials reported only 228 churches and 17,268 members. Nevertheless, there is evidence of a surge of growth during the 1990s. In March 2000, the Assemblies of God reported 294 congregations with about 46,900 members in Costa Rica, which made this religious group the largest Protestant denomination in the nation.

If the statistics are correct, then this denomination grew significantly by planting many new congregations (geographical expansion), as well as by attracting more people to the existing churches. Part of this church growth can be attributed to an increase in membership among some of the suburban congregations in the San José Metro Area. The largest AG congregation in the nation was reported to be Iglesia Oasis de Esperanza (about 3,500 members) in Moravia, a suburb of San José; the pastor and his congregation can also be seen on a weekly local TV program. In addition, the Assemblies of God have been successful in founding many private Christian schools under the sponsorship of a local church in the Central Valley.

SOUTHERN BAPTIST-RELATED CHURCHES (1944)

One of the largest of the ten Baptist groups in Costa Rica is the work historically related to the Southern Baptist Convention. Their first church in Costa Rica was a group that broke away from the Central American Mission in 1943, under the leadership of Aurelio Gutiérrez, who was appointed to the Home Mission Board in 1944. During this early period, the doctrine of "Landmarkism" was especially strong, which brought ill repute upon the Baptists because they taught that "Baptists, especially Southern Baptists, constitute the only true and legitimate succession of the Apostolic Church" (Nelson 1962:229). Many of the early Baptists in Costa Rica had been "converted" from other evangelical groups. However, dissention soon arose within the new Baptist movement, leading to the formation of a splinter group, known as the National Baptist Church, in 1945.

From 1944 to 1948, Gutiérrez was the only resident missionary of the Southern Baptists, but the Rev. Van Earl Hughes was sent to Costa Rica in late 1947. With his arrival, the former policy of Landmarkism began to change, and relationships improved with other evangelical groups. Although the Baptist Convention did not become affiliated with the Evangelical Alliance when it was formed in 1950, they did cooperate wholeheartedly in the Evangelism-in-Depth campaign in Costa Rica during 1960-61.

The expansion of the Baptist work began in 1944 when missions were begun in Cinco Esquinas, Moravia, Puriscal and Nicoya, and the following year in Limón, Naranjo and Alajuela. The first Annual Convention was held in 1946 with representatives from six

churches and missions. By 1949, when the Convention was transferred to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, there were three organized churches and six missions, with about 220 members.

The period 1950-60 was marked by the organization of six new churches, the construction of new church buildings, the initiation of a theological seminary and the paternalistic economic policy by the Foreign Board. Funds for the purchase of property and the construction of new temples, as well as pastoral salaries, all came from the Foreign Board, with very little economic participation from the local churches. After the founding of the Baptist Theological Seminary in 1951, new fields were opened by the graduates with the economic support of the Mission. However, the work suffered a setback in 1955 when Gutiérrez led a breakaway movement that became affiliated with the World Baptist Fellowship. By 1960, however, new churches and missions had been added to the work that had grown to 613 members and a Sunday school attendance of 1,278. By 1962, a total of 867 members were reported by all the churches and missions in Costa Rica related to the Baptist Convention.

Beginning in 1957 there was a turnover in missionary personnel, with nine new couples arriving by 1979. Among them were seminary professors, literature workers, general missionaries, urban church developers and pioneer workers. Three new fields were opened by evangelistic missionaries (church planters) in Turrialba, San Ramón and San Isidro. Baptist bookstores were started in San José (1958) and San Ramón (1960). Since 1966, an excellent campground has been developed by the Southern Baptists in San Rafael de Ojo de Agua that is used by many different groups.

Beginning in 1960, the Southern Baptist Mission began a ten-year program aimed at self-support, which created a crisis in missionary-national relationships. During 1963, several pastors resigned in protest, but the churches generally accepted the responsibility of self-support. The Baptist Convention, since 1966, has administered the funds sent through the Foreign Mission Board for church work in Costa Rica and for its various institutions (Baptist Theological Institute, Baptist Camp and bookstores) and programs (social, youth and evangelistic work). By 1973, most of the churches were self-supporting, although many of the pastors were working part-time outside the church. However, lay participation increased, and the churches continued to grow both in number and membership.

Between 1967 and 1978, the Baptist Convention had a 6.7% AAGR, increasing from 1,107 members in 1967 to 1,626 in 1974 and 2,260 members were reported in 1978. By 1978, there were 27 organized churches and 13 missions.

In 1980 (Note: this is the date given by Bieske, page 44; but it appears that the rupture occurred in the Annual Convention of 1979; see Nelson, page 290) the Baptist Convention of Costa Rica (BCCR) had a falling out with the Southern Baptist Foreign

Mission Board (SBFMB) in the USA, and the former became independent of the latter. The main problem seems to have been a breakdown in relationships between the missionaries (related to the Foreign Mission Board) and the national pastors (related to the national Baptist Convention) over the issue of the autonomy of the local congregations and the use of funds from abroad. Consequently, each organization went its separate way.

After the split, 12 churches remained with the BCCR, while others became independent of both groups, and a few remained in fellowship with the SBC. For years both associations of churches sought to incorporate the independent Baptist churches into their own ranks. The SBC-related churches and missions continued to receive the support of the SBFMB. After about three years of financial struggles, the BCCR became affiliated with the American Baptist Churches in the USA, which enabled the Baptist Convention to cover part of its budget with funds from abroad and to begin its own Bible institute program with courses at night. In 1986, the BCCR reported 17 churches and 11 missions (28 congregations), with about 850 members; and in 1989, there were 24 churches and 6 missions (30 congregations), with about 2,500 members. Obviously, there was significant growth in membership (194%) but not in the total number of congregations.

In 1989, the BCCR reported 30 congregations, while the SBFMB-related fellowship of churches, called the National Union of Baptist Churches (NUBC), reported 17 churches and eight missions (25 congregations) with about 620 members. It could be that the separation between the two sister organizations allowed each one to concentrate more on its own priorities and development unhindered, and that this released the built-up tension and allowed greater freedom and creativity to emerge, thereby producing greater growth in total membership and in the establishment of new congregations than might have been achieved if the split had not occurred. Both organizations appear to have been "revitalized" after the split took place, and to have grown both in quality and quantity.

In March 2000, the BCCR reported 31 congregations and 1,400 members, whereas the NUBC reported 22 congregations and 1,517 members, which makes a total of 53 congregations and 2,917 members. By comparison, at this same time, other Baptist groups reported the following: Missionary Baptists (two groups of churches), 21 congregations and 1,500 members; Bible Baptist Churches (six different groups of churches), 20 congregations and 3,442 members; and others (largely, independents), 29 congregations and 2,610 members.

INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL (1954)

The International Church of the Foursquare Gospel initiated work in Costa Rica in 1954 as an extension of its strong work in Panama, where the Foursquare Church was one of

the largest evangelical groups in the nation. Around 1954, a mission was begun in Puntarenas, and in the later part of 1955 work began in San José. Due to the influx of Panamanian Foursquare members into the banana region of southwestern Costa Rica, a considerable number of Foursquare churches arose in that area. In 1978, nineteen out of a total of 31 Foursquare churches in Costa Rica were located in this region.

Of the larger Protestant denominations in Costa Rica, the Foursquare Church had the second highest rate of growth for the period 1960-1978, somewhat lower than that of the Assemblies of God. From 56 members in 1956, the Foursquare work increased to 250 members in 1960. The total membership tripled between 1960 and 1967, with 758 members recorded in 1967. Between 1967 and 1978, an annual growth rate of 14.4% was maintained, with 1,626 members in 1964 and 2,905 in 1978. In 1986, denominational officials reported 2,500 members among 73 churches and 32 "campos blancos" (preaching points). A Bible institute was established at the central church in San José for the training of national pastors and lay workers.

The growth of the Foursquare Church continued during the 1990s, more so in membership than in starting new churches. In 1989, the Foursquare Church reported 74 churches and 34 "campos blancos," with about 3,750 members. By March 2000, there were 77 churches and 23 "campos blancos" with about 4,776 members. There were two congregations among Native American Indians, Cabécares and Guaimí, in the southern zone. This was the 5th largest Protestant denomination in Costa Rica in 2000.

BIBLE BAPTIST CHURCHES (1958)

There are several church associations in Costa Rica that are related to the Baptist Bible Fellowship movement in the United States. The largest of these associations was established in San José about 1958 by Jefferson Meek. According to Nelson, after some initial success, this group began to lose ground because of its "Fighting Fundamentalism" stance. By 1974, however, the work had increased to 287 members, and several new missionary couples arrived in Costa Rica. Filled with youthful enthusiasm, the new missionaries embarked on an aggressive evangelistic ministry in several new, middle-class neighborhoods in San José, where they successfully established new churches. Their approach has been to set up a tent ministry in a vacant lot that they purchased, conducting evangelistic meetings in the evenings and training new leaders in the mornings, which was similar to Strachan's approach during the 1920s. Later, after the congregation grows to an adequate size, a permanent temple is built with the aid of stateside churches.

By 1978, the Bible Baptists had established four churches and three missions, with a total membership of 2,950. This gives them an average congregational size of 421 members, which was probably the highest average size of any Protestant denomination in Costa Rica at that time. Even more noteworthy is the fact that the Bible Baptists'

annual growth rate between 1974 and 1978 was a remarkable 79%; however, they started from a small membership base. Nevertheless, in this period, the Bible Baptists outdistanced all other Baptist groups in Costa Rica, and their church in San Sabastian alone reported almost 1,000 members, with an even greater number in attendance in 1978.

In 1980, other smaller Baptist groups in Costa Rica were: American Baptist Association (13 churches and 540 members), Baptist Missionary Association of America (295 members), Baptist International Mission (277 members), World Baptist Fellowship (212 members), and several other independent groups related to Bible Baptist churches in the United States.

According to a 1998 study by Clive Buttermere (a missionary with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board), there were a total of 181 churches and missions that were part of 10 church associations or were independent (13 congregations) that can be classified as "Baptist" in Costa Rica (Buttemere, 1999). However, we have classified the Association of Costa Rican Bible Churches (AIBC, related to the Latin America Mission) as part of the Baptist Family of Churches. By March 2000, the total number of Baptist churches and missions in Costa Rica consisted of 257 congregations with about 19,250 members, according to PROLADES.

WORLDWIDE MISSIONARY MOVEMENT - IGLESIA CRISTIANA PENTECOSTAL DEL MOVIMIENTO MISIONERO MUNDIAL (1963)

Founded in 1963 in Puerto Rico by the Rev. Luis M. Ortiz (1918-1996), who had been a missionary with the Assemblies of God in Cuba from 1944 to 1959, this denomination arrived in Costa Rica also in 1963 through Ortiz' personal evangelistic ministry. By 1986, under the leadership of National Supervisor Luis A. Monge Salazar, 26 churches, 10 missions and 18 preaching points had been established with a total of 1,788 members and a church community of about 2,500. In early 2000, there were 110 churches, 30 missions and 80 preaching points, with an estimated membership of 5,000, which made this religious group the 9th largest Protestant denomination in Costa Rica. The National Supervisor in 2000 was the Rev. Carlos F. Guerra Suárez. About 90% of the members were native Costa Ricans and 10% were a mixture of Nicaraguans, Colombians and Salvadorans. In 2003, there were 160 established congregations (churches and missions) with about 7,500 baptised members. The average congregational size was 47 members. This denomination has an Episcopal form of church government, with the National Superintendent functioning as a bishop; all church properties are held in the name of the denomination.

PENTECOSTAL CHURCH OF GOD (1970)

This Puerto Rican denomination arrived in Costa Rica in 1970 in the person of missionary Virgilio Figueroa, who established his headquarters in the San José area. In 1978, Figueroa reported 14 churches and 1,200 members nationally. In 2000, this denomination reported 118 congregations with a total of about 4,000 members, which made the Pentecostal Church of God the 12th largest Protestant denomination in Costa Rica. Doctrinally, this group has basically the same statement of faith as the Assemblies of God, from which it emerged in Puerto Rico in 1921 as national church body affiliated with the Assemblies of God in the USA. The Pentecostal Church of God in Puerto Rico began its own missionary program in 1940, which resulted in the establishment of affiliated churches in many Latin American countries as well as an earlier (1929) sister denomination on the East Coast of the USA: The Latin American Council of the Pentecostal Church of God of New York.

ROSE OF SHARON CHRISTIAN MISSION (1976)

According to a study by CAM missionary Sigifredo W. Bieske, the Rose of Sharon Christian Mission was founded in San José in 1976, following an extended evangelistic campaign led by evangelist Gumercindo Melgar, a controversial Pentecostal leader from Guatemala. Before leaving Costa Rica, Melgar entrusted José Luis Madrigal, a Costa Rican pastor who had no formal theological training, with the responsibility of providing pastoral care for the small congregation that had been formed as a result of the crusade.

From this small beginning, Madrigal and his organization began to make quite a name for themselves (positive with some, negative with others) in Costa Rica, not only because of Madrigal's charisma and style of worship but also due to the rapid growth of the movement. First, Madrigal rented the second floor of a commercial building, located near Plaza González Víquez on the south side of San José, where they began to hold meetings in late 1976. Within two years, the congregation had increased to more than 300 members and had outgrown the facilities. Consequently, part of the congregation moved to a larger meeting place near the Central Market in the "red-light" district, renting another "upper room" in a building that formerly housed the Canada Dry Company. From these two locations, Madrigal and his followers began to hold evangelistic meetings around the country that resulted in the formation of a series of daughter congregations. By 1983, the Rose of Sharon Christian Mission reported 26 affiliated congregations with about 3,000 adherents (no membership records are kept).

However, in 1984 a conflict developed between Madrigal and Yamil Herrera, the pastor of the Plaza Víquez congregation, which resulted in the movement's first division. After Brenes was forced to leave Madrigal's organization, he started a new church in the "red-light" district of San José that became known as Maranata. In 1986, although the central

church in San José had only about 100 members, the Maranata movement (affiliated with Maranatha Church in Chicago, IL, USA) reported 1,130 total adherents in 5 small congregations throughout the country. In 2000, there were eight churches and six missions (14 congregations) in Costa Rica affiliated with the **Maranatha World Ministry of Faith and Power**.

Both of these movements are characterized as very authoritarian, with the founder being the dominant leader and prophet who requires absolute obedience and loyalty from his followers. Both Madrigal and Brenes are given to sharing "special revelation" by means of dreams, visions, tongues and prophecy, which enhances their authority and popularity among their followers. The worship services, which often last for two or three hours or more, are characterized by very active and loud participation by members of the congregation in a variety of activities: singing, praying, dancing in the spirit, speaking in tongues, words of prophecy, etc. There is also a strong emphasis on divine healing and the casting out of demons led by church leaders. Consequently, both the Rose of Sharon Christian Mission and Maranata are classified as part of the Divine Healing and Liberation Family of Churches within the Pentecostal Movement.

In early 1983, Madrigal began to promote the idea of building a large central church with a seating capacity of about 6,000. At that time the "mother" church of the movement, located in the Central Market district, only had about 800 people in attendance. Madrigal began to raise money to buy a large piece of property (about 4,000 square meters), located across the street from the Kamakiri Restaurant on Calle Central in Barrio Tournón (District of San Francisco de Goicoechea) on the north side of San José, for about \$100,000. His vision was to build a three-story building on this site consisting of a first floor for church offices and a dining hall for social activities, a large second-floor auditorium (seating 6,000), and a basement to be used as a parking garage. By late 1983, the property had been purchased and construction began on the basement area, but soon the funds ran out and the project came to a halt. However, after the congregation began to meet in the unfinished basement, the attendance continued to grow (about 1,200) and the funds continued to flow, which allowed construction efforts to resume. At the end of 1989, a temporary roof had been built for the first floor, and the congregation had grown to about 2,000 in attendance.

By 1986, the Rose of Sharon Christian Mission was an established "denomination," reporting 25 churches and missions with about 3,915 members. In 1990, Madrigal reported about 6,000 adherents in 30 congregations. However, a series of problems arose during the 1990s that resulted in the closing of some of the daughter congregations, with the members of these returning to the mother church, while other daughter congregations became independent of Rosa de Sarón.

In 1995, five of the dissident groups joined forces to form the **Association of Wesleyan Churches** (Holiness tradition), with international ties to the International Wesleyan

Church in Indianapolis, Indiana, USA. In August 2001, there were 30 churches and about 3,000 baptized members related to this denomination. Two of the main leaders of this group are president Robert Barrantes (Concepción de Tres Ríos, La Unión, Cartago), and vice-president Luis Azofefa (Grecia, Alajuela).

Meanwhile, the mother church of Misión Cristiana "La Rosa de Sarón" in Barrio Tournón reported an average Sunday worship attendance of about 10,000 in March 2000, which made it the largest single congregation in the nation. In addition, there were four other congregations related to Rosa de Sarón (including one in Ciudad Colón and one in Santiago de Puriscal). This is the 4th largest Protestant denomination in Costa Rica.

THE NATIONAL EVANGELICAL CHURCH COUNCIL (1978)

This is an autochthonous Costa Rican Pentecostal denomination with no known links to any religious group in other countries. It was founded on 19 June 1978 at the Iglesia Evangélica Nacional in the municipality of Guadalupe, Barrio San Gerardo, Cantón de Goecochea (suburb of San José, the capital city) by eight members of the Board of Directors of the new Asociación Concilio Iglesias Evangélicas Nacionales de Costa Rica (ACIENCR), which held office from 1978 to 1980. This denomination has a Presbyterian form of church government, with the ruling elders making all of the most important decisions for the Association without consulting the members. The President of the ACIENCR at its founding in 1978 was the Rev. Edgar Chacón Alvarado (hijo), who held that office until 1986 when he was replaced by Ramón Rojas Chavarría (1986-1988).

In 1994, denominational officials reported 46 organized churches with 58 licensed preachers, which were divided into eight presbyteries: San José I (Guadalupe, Zapote, Cinco Esquinas and Centro Cristiano Canaán), San José II (Centro Cristiano Fe y Esperanza, San Juan de Tibas and San Felipe), San José III (Santa Ana, Puriscal, La Fila and Guayabo de Mora), San José IV (Villas de Ayarco, Monte Sinaí and Dos Cercas), Alajuela (La Argentina, Palmares, San Ramón and Tacaes), Zona Sur (Ciudad Cortéz, Abrojos Ciudad Neily and Miramar), Parrita (Pueblo Nuevo, La Julieta, Palo Seco, Cerritos, Cerros, La Loma and Damas), Puerto Jiménez (El Edén de Osa, Rincón de Osa, Palma de Osa, Palo Seco de Osa, Sándola, Puerto Jiménez Centro, Río Tigre, Cañaza and San Miguel), Guanacaste (Santa Ana, Paso Tempisque, Belén, Corralitlos, Santo Domingo, Ortega and San Blas), Puntarenas (Cidral) and Zona Atlántica (Pejivalle).

Geographically, the 46 organized churches were located as follows: San José Province (14), Alajuela Province (4), Zona Sur (Southern Puntarenas Province, 3), Central Pacific Region (Part of Puntarenas Province, 7), Puerto Jiménez area (Part of Puntarenas Province, 9), Northern Puntarenas Province (1), Guanacaste Province (7) and Zona Atlántica (Limón Province, 1). The total for Puntarenas Province was 20 churches.

In 1988, the ACIENCR acquired by merger the churches and properties that formerly belonged to the Asociación Bíblica Elim (ABE) in Guanacaste Province with seven organized churches located in the Cantón of Carrillo, which are listed above under Guanacaste Province in 1994. The ABE was created by the evangelistic, pastoral and teaching ministry of the Rev. and Mrs. Kenneth Bennett, who had a casual association with Elim Assemblies in Lima, New York, a Pentecostal denomination in the Latter Rain tradition. This included the property of the Elim Bible Institute in Carrillo, organized and built by the Bennett's as part of their 20-year's of ministry in Guanacaste. Faced with a need to retire from their mission work in Costa Rica and return to the USA, the Bennetts decided to turn over their mission work to the ACIENCR along with the legal title to all of their property, rather than selling the property and keeping the assets for their retirement.

However, there have been a number of serious conflicts among the principal leaders of this denomination, with some dissident pastors leaving to join other denominations with a loss of an estimated 8-10 organized churches. Consequently, there was not much real church growth between 1986 and 2000. The official denominational statistics for March 2000 showed only 41 organized churches and 4,768 members.

Nevertheless, the ACIENCR did experience considerable church growth between the date of its founding in 1978 with 7 or 8 organized churches and 1986 when this denomination reported 41 organized churches, two missions and 17 preaching points, with a total of 3,351 baptized members and a church community of about 4,600. Most of this growth occurred in the Provinces of San José and Puntarenas due to the evangelistic activities of numerous pastors and to an alleged spiritual revival that occurred in the Central Pacific Region of Puntarenas Province during the early 1980s.

**TABLE OF 24 LARGEST PROTESTANT DENOMINATIONS
IN COSTA RICA, MARCH 2000**

DENOMINATION	NUMBER OF CONG.	NUMBER OF MEMBERS
1 ASAMBLEAS DE DIOS	294	46.900
2 IGLESIA ADVENTISTA DEL SETIMO DIA	132	31.350
3 IGLESIA DE DIOS (CLEVELAND, TN)	380	19.000
4 MISION CRISTIANA ROSA DE SARON	5	12.500
5 IGLESIA EVANGELICA CUADRANGULAR	99	9.900
6 ASOCIACION DE IGLESIAS BIBLICAS (AIBC)	134	8.772
7 ASOC. DE IGLS. EVANGS. CENTROAMERICANAS	69	5.925
8 IGLESIA SANTIDAD PENTECOSTAL	76	5.850
9 MOVIMIENTO MISIONERO MUNDIAL	140	5.000
10 IGLESIA METODISTA DE COSTA RICA	50	5.000
11 CONCILIO IGLESIA EVANGELICA NACIONAL	41	4.768
12 IGLESIA DE DIOS PENTECOSTAL	118	4.000
13 IGLESIAS DE CRISTO	38	3.800
14 ASAMBLEA APOSTOLICA DE FE EN CRISTO JESUS	34	3.550
15 IGLESIAS BIBLICAS BAUTISTAS	20	3.442
16 CONF. MENONITA CONSERVADORA	21	3.000
17 ASOCIACION MISIONES TRANSMUNDIALES	17	3.000
18 MISION CARISMATICA INTERNACIONAL	1	3.000
19 IGLESIA DE DIOS DE LA PROFESIA	64	2.500
20 IGLESIA PENTECOSTAL UNIDA	33	2.250
21 IGLESIA DEL NAZARENO	33	2.006
22 COM. MISIONERA PUERTA DE FE	16	1.600
23 UNION NACIONAL DE IGLESIAS BAUTISTAS	22	1.527
24 CONVENCION BAUTISTA DE COSTA RICA	31	1.400
SUBTOTAL: 24 LISTED ABOVE	1,880	189,372
SUBTOTAL: OTHERS	390	39,285
TOTAL	2,270	228,657

(NOTE: SORTED BY NUMBER OF REPORTED MEMBERS)

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