

# Guatemala Pilgrimage

## 2012 Guatemala Pilgrimage

**14 – 24 July 2012**

**February Update**

**REGISTRATION IS OPEN!**



Sign up now to join two dozen others in July for our 11th annual work pilgrimage in the highlands of Guatemala. This year we will once again be working with the Mayan organization 'Programa de Ayuda a los Vecinos del Altiplano' – PAVA (Aid Program for Highland Communities).

PAVA has begun helping communities that already have a school establish a library. Village libraries provide a place where all residents of the village can have access to books and computers even when the school is not in session.

Last July we visited a community library in San Juan de Laguna, a site that PAVA board members recommended as an example of what they are considering. It was exciting to see the large collection of books, the reading area for young children and the Internet access center all available right off the village square. This year we will be able to help make this access to



learning available in another village in Chimaltenango!

This July we will return to Paxixil, where we helped the villagers expand their school last year. Using a fabulous new "green" design, we will invest ourselves in building a model library/computer center for use by adults and children. This could be your chance to experience community in a new way and make a difference for the next generation of indigenous Guatemalans.

Traditionally, PAVA has helped disadvantaged but eager communities build the schools and running water systems they need to support community life and the bridges they need to connect them with the world outside the village. Several years ago they began a mobile library program, stocking a 'bookmobile' that can visit villages and exchange books that families use to supplement reading lessons at school. Now they are helping local communities establish libraries where books and computer resources will be available much more often than a book-mobile can support.

This July we'll be working on a construction crew with folks from the village, teaching and playing with the children and sharing their enthusiasm and their hope. Each evening we'll have time together to reflect on our experience and growing insights. We'll be staying in the modest-but-comfortable Lutheran Center, a retreat facility in Antigua, the 500 year old colonial capital city of Central America, known for its charm and great restaurants. Our days in the village and nights in Antigua will give us surprising opportunities for deepening our relationships with God, Creation and ourselves. Come ready to listen and expect to be changed!

† [Go to the PAVA Image blog](#)

After our week in the village we'll stay 3 nights at Las Buenas Nuevas, a missionary retreat center in Panajachel. The cottages are in a beautiful garden setting overlooking Lake Atitlan. This will be our base camp for day trips across the lake to visit missions and ministries in San Juan de Laguna and Santiago Atitlan, as well as a visit to the famous indigenous market in Chichicastenango. We'll also have the opportunity for some alternative experiences, possibly including a visit to the local tropical preserve.

† [Download the registration form](#)

† [Download a poster to help spread the word](#)

† [Contact the Guatemala Pilgrimage Team](#)

Facilitated By: Marjory and Peter Bankson (Seekers Church)

Cost: \$1,100 plus transportation to and from Guatemala City (Registration includes underwriting our projects in Guatemala, hotel for 10 nights; bus transportation in Guatemala and most meals. Price does not include airfare to Guatemala. Estimated cost of airfare to Guatemala City from major US cities is about \$600. Check to see if your frequent flyer miles can get you there. Some scholarship assistance is available.

Plan to arrive mid-day on July 14th and depart after 10:00

a.m. on July 24th.

To register, print and complete the on-line registration form, then mail a copy and mail with your deposit (\$200) to Seekers Church (276 Carroll Street NW, Washington DC 20012)



Marjory & Peter Bankson

Updated: February 8, 2012

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# **The 2011 Pilgrimage is Complete: Hope for the Next Generation!**

August 4, 2011





Last month 24 pilgrims from across the country completed the 2011 PAVA Pilgrimage. We helped PAVA work with the people of Aldea Paxixil, a small, agricultural community near Tecpan in the highland Department of Chimaltenango to start construction of a 6-room addition to their school which serves 146 children from 82 families. Men from the village had already started digging the 2-meter-deep trenches for a foundation and, in spite of heavy rains, we were able to reach the point of pouring concrete for the footings – a beehive of activity in which half the group is bringing sand, gravel and water to the cement mixer and others are carrying mixed cement by the bucket-full across planks and mounded dirt to anchor the upright pillars.



For PAVA, the purpose of a project like this is not only to build a school, but to call forth leadership and cooperation among the villagers, essential community qualities that were lost when a whole generation of leaders was lost during the war in Guatemala. Although the villagers are much more skilled with hand tools than we are, they watch the way we work together, men and women, young and old, and seem to appreciate our presence as much as our help. This year, the

younger teens brought embroidery thread and worked with the children to make friendship bracelets – gathering a crowd of eager children during recess. And Peter invited lots of laughter among the hard-working men when he passed out nose-flutes and demonstrated bird sounds and simple songs.



At Lake Atitlan, we visited a new community this year. PAVA had asked us to check out San Juan la Laguna, because it has the only public library on the Lake. We were charmed by its clean streets, public murals and many weaving cooperatives as well as the library where everyone has access to a dozen computers. We learned that the village had been able to avoid involvement in the war because they had “pacifist mayors,” according to our guide. When we were told that a mayor serves a two-year term and cannot succeed himself, we asked where that pool of leadership came from. “Our cooperatives,” he said. “Coffee and weaving cooperatives have been going for 60 years and they encourage the skills we need for leadership.” Using a weaving metaphor, the guide said: “The co-ops are the warp-threads of our community.”



We were surprised that the pilgrimage roster filled so quickly this year! It's a sign that this ministry is still an important part of the lives of many people. The sponsorship transition from Faith@Work/[Lumunos](#) to Seekers Church seems to be working well and with Aeren Martinez (an alumna of Seekers Church and pilgrimage veteran) on the PAVA board, our in-country coordination went smoothly. We have already made local arrangements for the trip next year, which will be July 14-24, 2012.

You might check out the new [PAVA information blog](#) to see pictures from several villages we've served in past years. You can also [read Aeren's reflections on her pilgrimage experience](#) in a sermon she offered at Seekers Church after the pilgrimage in 2007.

If you feel moved to help, now would be a great time to support this year's project by sending a donation directly to PAVA. [Here's a link to the contribution page of the PAVA Foundation web site.](#)

Watch the Seekers web site for information about registering for next year's pilgrimage. You can let us know that you're interested by e-mailing us ([pilgrimage@seekerschurch.org](mailto:pilgrimage@seekerschurch.org)).

Marjory & Peter Bankson

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# The 2011 Pilgrimage is full!

February 11, 2011

This year's pilgrimage is fully subscribed! We have commitments from 28 people for our trip in July to work with PAVA on a school just south of Tecpan. This year PAVA has selected a project to expand a school that serves 140 children from 82 families in a neighborhood west of the Pan American highway near the Mayan archaeological site of Iximche. Here is a picture from PAVA of the site where this year's pilgrims will be helping build a new school.



We were surprised that the roster filled so quickly! It's a sign that this ministry is still an important part of the lives of many people. I know that there are some of you who have been thinking about coming this year, and I want to make sure you know that as far as we are concerned this won't be the last Guatemala pilgrimage to support PAVA. The sponsorship transition from Faith@Work/Lumunos to Seekers Church seems to be working well and with Aeren Martinez (an alumna of Seekers Church and pilgrimage veteran) on the PAVA board our in-



country coordination is going very well.

You might check out the new [PAVA information blog](#) to see pictures from several villages we've served in past years. You can also [read Aeren's reflections on her pilgrimage experience](#) in a sermon she offered at Seekers Church after the pilgrimage in 2007.

If you feel moved to help, now would be a great time to support this year's project by sending a donation directly to PAVA. [Here's a link to the contribution page of the PAVA Foundation web site.](#)

Peter Bankson

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# **2011 Guatemala Pilgrimage Background**



Join two dozen others in July for our 10th annual work pilgrimage in the highlands of Guatemala. This year we will once again be working with the Mayan organization 'Programa de Ayuda a los Vecinos del Altiplano' – PAVA (Aid Program for Highland Communities). PAVA has identified Pueblo Viejo, a community near Tecpan in Chimaltenango where the residents are ready to expand their school. Their current school has two solid classrooms, but other classes are held in buildings that are not well-suited to protect the students from the weather. The people of Pueblo Viejo, located near the Mayan ruins at Iximche, know the value of having a school in the village that can support students through the first six grades. A local school allows most young women of the village to learn the skills they need to help lead their country into the future.

PAVA helps disadvantaged but eager communities build the schools and running water systems they need to support community life and the bridges they need to connect them with the world outside the village.

After the 2010 pilgrimage the executive director of PAVA started a blog with images of progress on the school in la Puerta where the pilgrimage joined with residents to start construction. New images appear every month, showing how the project is progressing.

† [Go to the PAVA Image blog](#)



For five days we'll be working on the construction crew with folks from the village, teaching and playing with the children and sharing their enthusiasm and their hope. Each evening we'll have time together to reflect on our experience and growing insights. We'll be staying in the modest-but-comfortable Lutheran Center, a retreat facility in Antigua, the 500 year old colonial capital city of Central America, known for its charm and great restaurants. Our days in the village and nights in Antigua will give us surprising opportunities for deepening our relationships with God, Creation and ourselves. Come ready to listen and expect to be changed!



After our week in the village we'll stay 3 nights at Las Buenas Nuevas, a missionary retreat center in Panajachel. The cottages are in a beautiful garden setting overlooking Lake Atitlan. This will be our base camp for day trips across the lake to visit missions and ministries in San Lucas Toliman and Santiago Atitlan, as well as a visit to the famous indigenous market in Chichicastenango. We'll also have the opportunity for some alternative experiences, possibly including a visit to the local tropical preserve.

[† Download the registration form](#)

[† Download a poster to help spread the word](#)

[† Contact the Guatemala Pilgrimage Team](#)

Facilitated By: Marjory and Peter Bankson (Seekers Church)

Marjory and Peter have been helping to lead these work pilgrimages since 2002. For many years they have supported the ministry of Faith at Work (now Lumunos) where Marjory served as executive director. They are Stewards of Seekers Church, where Peter is a member of the Servant Leadership Team (staff).

To Register: Complete the registration form on line, then print a copy and mail with your deposit (\$200) to Seekers Church (276 Carroll Street NW, Washington DC 20012)

Cost: \$1,100 plus transportation to and from Guatemala City

(Registration includes underwriting our projects in Guatemala, hotel for 10 nights; bus transportation in Guatemala and most meals. Price does not include airfare to Guatemala. Estimated cost of airfare to Guatemala City from major US cities is \$700-\$900. Check to see if your frequent flyer miles can get you there. Plan to arrive mid-day on July 9th and depart after 10:00 a.m. on July 19th. Some scholarship assistance is available.)



Marjory & Peter Bankson

Updated: March 22, 2011