

ONE CHALLENGE: Reaching the World Together. . .

Saratoga, California 1999

Kyle and Nell were raising support to become missionaries in Guatemala. They visited Tom and Mary Priest, lifelong friends of Nell's family. The Priests had invited a veteran missionary couple, also supported by Saratoga Federated Church, to their home that day and Kyle and Nell had the privilege of meeting David and Helen Ekstrom. David and Helen have lived in the rural area in Huehuetenango for more than 50 years. They have learned five indigenous languages of Guatemala as they have worked on translations of both the Old and New Testaments.

A Partnership Is Formed

A ministry partnership was formed between: David and Helen Ekstrom, OC Guatemala (aka SEPAL), Bible Translations of Mayan Languages (a Guatemalan-based organization), and Geneva Global (a foundation based out of Pennsylvania). The goal of this partnership is to see 6,000 Chuj Bibles printed and distributed, 600 people literate, and 26 men and women trained in Bible and ministry.

Willy and Amarilis Peralta, SEPAL missionaries who relocated to Huehuetenango over a year ago, live minutes away from the Ekstroms. Willy is serving as the administrator of the literacy project, an 18-month program in the local church. When he presented the requirement to the literacy teachers that each of them would need 20 students, one of the teachers responded, "But we don't even have that many people in our church."

Willy's response was, *"Stop right there, this isn't just a program for people from the church. Of course you want people from the church to learn how to read the Bible, but this is a gift you want to give to your community. You need to go out on the streets and find students and invite people to come in and learn how to read and write. And as they learn, the first thing they will be able to read in their language is the Bible. It's your testimony to the community; they will remember it for the rest of their lives: 'It was the church that taught me how to read.'"*



Gustavo Venegas (Bible Translations of Mayan Languages), Kyle Stiff and Willy Peralta (SEPAL), and David Ekstrom (CAM International) in the San Mateo Chuj region of Guatemala.

Also from SEPAL, Héctor Pivaral, who along with his wife Patty, has served for over 10 years, is the coordinator of the Bible Education Program. During the course of two years, this program will train 26 Chuj men and women to read and study the Bible and pass that on to others in their community.

The San Mateo Chuj Language

The Ekstroms, along with their helpers, have recently completed the translation of the entire Bible in the San Mateo Chuj language. The Chuj Scriptures are in their final revision process and will soon be presented to this people group. David and Helen sought out other Christian organizations to partner with them in order for their translation to have a greater impact with the Chuj community.

Kyle Makes a Visit

Kyle had the privilege of traveling to the San Mateo Chuj region with Willy, David, and the founder of Bible Translations of Mayan Languages to meet with leaders of the churches and discuss the goals of this partnership. He was impressed that the vision for the San Mateo Chuj project goes beyond the members of the church and is focused on reaching the community and that our team is truly involved in: *Reaching the World Together.*

Kyle & Nell