

Church of God Pastor Killed in Guatemala

A Guatemalan **Church of God pastor** was murdered a few days ago while on his way to a territorial ministers meeting, apparently by drug traffickers known as "The Zetas," who control the area near the border with Mexico.

Neftali Leiva, father of five daughters, the youngest only two years old, was gunned down as he neared the place of the meeting, according to his territorial administrative bishop, Jose Clara Vela. The shooting was witnessed by another pastor. No one knows what motivated the attack.

World Missions has set up a relief fund to help care for the widow and children. It is identified as Project 020-0803-063.

The border territory is only about 30 miles long, but it is home to 73 Church of God congregations. Overseer Clara reports that 20 new churches have been planted in the region in the last two years. Although the church is growing stronger, it is in an area of violence caused by drug distribution and transit.

"When we travel in the area, we go with the car windows down so people will see who we are and not confuse us with their enemies," the overseer said.

The pastor who was killed had been on leave for nearly a year because he had been severely injured when hit by a car. He and his family had been cared for by the territorial church office, and the ministers meeting marked his return to full-time ministry.

According to an elderly minister who stood nearby, an unknown assailant walked up to the victim without a word and shot him point blank several times. When the shooter saw the elderly

minister a short way down the street, he also fired three times in his direction. The pastor felt the bullets go by and impact the trees behind him, but he was unhurt. It is the practice in the violent area to leave no witnesses.

“The assassin shouted, ‘I’ll kill you,’” the witnessing pastor testified, “but **God’s hand of protection** covered me, and the man ran away.” The elderly minister is engaged in planting a new church just across the border in Mexico, under the auspices of the Guatemalan church.

Please pray for the family of the murdered pastor, and if you desire to help the family you may donate securely online by following the instructions (, click on Donate), or you may call 1-800-535-9343 and give by credit card.