

Blanca Margarita Valiente de Similox

Doña Margarita is an indigenous Mayan Presbyterian pastor; one of the first women to be ordained in the National Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Guatemala. Her exceptional work among the Kaqchikel people began in 1975 when she saw the need to invite the neighborhood children to her home to tell about Jesus and give them hope in a country that had already suffered under 15 years of nearly a four-decade civil war. Since then she has organized Bible studies for children, youth and women. She has ministered to hundreds of people persecuted and displaced by the armed conflict. Having organized and built up a local, multiethnic church with her husband, she continues to help oppressed women seek refuge and courage in the Word and facilitates their economic independence through small business initiatives. Under her tenure as Moderator of the Kaqchikel Presbytery, the Herb D. Valentine Medical and Psychological Clinic was birthed in partnership with the Presbytery of Baltimore. Her passion for social justice, always under-girded by scripture and validated by national and international human rights affiliations, provides an example for Presbyterian Women worldwide to put their own faith into action. She is currently running for Mayor of Chimaltenango, the city where the Kaqchikel Presbytery has its home base. Margarita and her husband have 4 children; the youngest, Layla, age 15, will accompany her mother on this trip to the US.

Josefina Inay de Martinez

Doña Josefina was ordained as a Minister of Word and Sacrament in the National Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Guatemala, along with Margarita Similox, in November, 2001. She is currently serving as the President of the Executive Committee of the Kaqchikel Presbytery while Margarita runs for political office. Serving as President of the Fraternity of Mayan Presbyterians, the Vice President of the Board of Directors of the Mayan Presbyterian Brotherhood and a longtime board member of CIEDEG (the Conference of Evangelical [means "Protestant" in Guatemala] Churches of Guatemala), she has worked tirelessly for the rights of women to be respected and upheld by religious and secular institutions. Having organized and built up several multiethnic churches with her husband throughout the years of civil war violence, she continues to uphold women through study of the scriptures, advocating for their human rights and helping them support themselves through small business ventures. As a young illiterate bride, she learned several Mayan languages and became literate in Kaqchikel and Spanish in order to do all she does today for indigenous Guatemalans. Josefina and her five daughters survive her husband/father, Lucio, one of several Presbyterian pastors martyred during the Civil War for defending the human rights of indigenous Guatemalans.