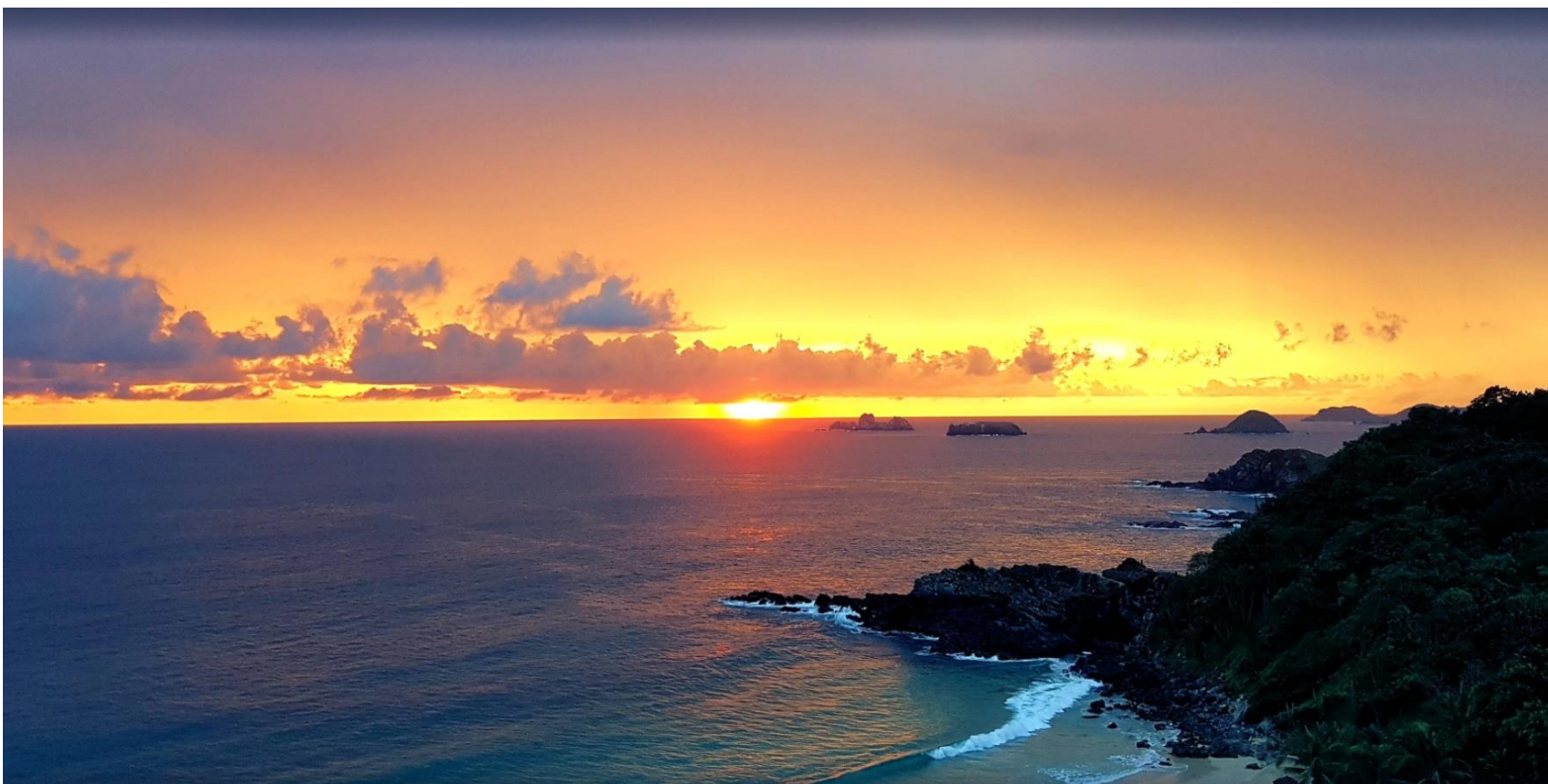




IXTAPA CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
Senior Pastor
Opportunity Profile



IXTAPA CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

In the late 1990's three women asked the Presbyterian Church to send someone to pastor the expatriates living here. Initially meeting in a bake shop, and a couple other places after that, in November 2004 a local hotel offered, without charge, a covered location where [Ixtapa Christian Fellowship](#) has held services ever since. That generous provision has allowed the church to use donations for local ministries rather than paying rent.

The congregation is mainly retirees although the ages range from 17 to 90. During the tourist season the worship service attendance tends to be 80-100 (prior to Covid-19) and during the offseason 12-20 people. ICF has spanned numerous denominations. The initial pastoral couple were Presbyterians from Mexico and North Carolina. From 2002 until now, the pastor has been Ron Cavenagh and his wife Rose, both Christian Brethren who come from Alberta. Now in his 70's, Ron is seeking a successor although he and Rose hope to still attend during the winters.



Besides the Sunday morning worship service there has traditionally been a weekly Bible study plus local ministries. ICF's income comes through tithes, offering and gifts. As a result of the gracious and generous response of God's people to this work, ICF gives regular financial support to two local missionaries/pastors and have in the past supported a seminary student at the local [Southern Baptist](#) seminary.

They also give regular support to the [Bet Shalom Home](#) for "at risk" seniors in the Ixtapa/Zihuatanejo area, and a missionary who works there, and Talita Cumi, home for children at risk. ICF also manages a fund for short term medical needs of the those less fortunate. A significant amount of funds received continue to be returned to the poor in the community, both in response to emergencies and disasters, as well as regular gifts.





THE LOCATION

Ixtapa (“ixtapa”) is located on the Pacific Ocean about 300 miles from Manzanillo to the north, 150 miles from Acapulco to the south, and 420 miles southeast of Mexico City. Developed in the 1970’s this beach town is primarily made up of numerous large hotels, condominium projects, a marina (where yachts come for the winter), and related restaurants and shops.

Three miles away is the fishing village/economic center Zihuatanejo (locally referred to “Zee-wa”) and together they make up what is called Ixtapa- Zihuatanejo, with a combined population of over 100,000. This church serves both communities. The most important economic activity for the municipality is tourism, with the major attractions being the beaches, surfing, and sport-fishing. Seventy-one percent of the municipality's population is engaged in the commercial and tourism sector of the economy.

In Zihuatanejo aside from tourism, fishing continues to be a way of life for many local families, bringing in seafood such as shark, clams, oysters, red snapper, bass and mullet, sailfish, mahi mahi, and tuna. The increasing popularity of the area as a sportfishing destination has given new impetus to their livelihood, and traditional fishing is being supplemented with fish farms.

Zihuatanejo is an old-fashioned fishing village jewel. Unprepossessing. Unpretentious. Charming. Walking the town streets, visiting the wonderful market, dining by the beach at good and affordable restaurants plus inexpensive small hotels, it all adds up to a most enjoyable, relaxing time for tourists.

Blessed with a great climate, wonderful beaches, and sheltered bays Ixtapa- Zihuatanejo attracts many tourists. Canadians and Americans start arriving in November and December and stay thru the winter and Mexicans (primarily coming from Mexico City, a six-hour drive), come with their families in December, April, July, and August. A fair amount of American and Canadian retirees live here year-round or come just for the winter.

THE OPPORTUNITY

The congregation has the potential to grow, even doubling in size. However, being made up primarily of retirees and vacationers, the tithes and offerings are limited, so this needs to be someone who has raised their own support or does not need support. It could be a well-experienced pastor who sees this as a 5-10+ year final assignment for his career. Or it could be a recent seminary graduate who has lived in a Spanish-speaking culture and is looking for a medium to long term pastorate. Or it could be a missionary wanting to move from the type of work they have been doing to now pastoring an international church. Or this could be a wonderful opportunity for a Spanish-speaking seminary or Bible college professor who has also been a pastor who could shepherd this church while also teaching at the nearby [Southern Baptist Seminary](#), just 20 miles away.

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

The greatest requirement for a person in the role of Senior Pastor is a strong personal commitment to Jesus Christ and a love for His church. The person must demonstrate commitment to ongoing spiritual development and maturity.

- Must possess elder requirements listed in I Timothy 3:1-7.
- Must have experience as a pastor and a leader.
- A theological degree is desirable.
- Must be able to articulate a clear calling to the pastoral leadership of the Ixtapa Christian Fellowship congregation.
- Exhibits the gifts of wisdom, leadership, and discernment.
- Must be someone of impeccable personal integrity and moral purity.
- Reads people and situations well in addition to an ability to discern gifting in others and the role that suits them best.
- Approachable, authentic, and a good example.
- Values input, getting “buy-in” to decisions, yet is decisive.
- Shows self-confidence yet is humble and has a servant’s heart.
- Radiates genuine warmth, attracts people, and is sensitive to others.
- Self-aware and authentic.
- Is energetic, has the stamina for a demanding position yet balances work with a strong walk with God, appropriate times for family and personal time for refreshing and recharging.



Job Responsibilities

- Leads the leadership group, of which he is one, giving overall leadership to the church.
- Help plan the weekly worship services.
- Teach weekly sermon.
- Provide short-term counseling.
- Conduct baptisms and baby dedications.
- Perform weddings and funerals of expats or church members.
- Discipleship of new and seasoned believers, helping them to grow in their relationship with Christ and their knowledge of the Bible.
- Bringing growth to people coming to know Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.
- Growing the number of people in the church and developing a church governance and ministry structure.

Ideal candidate qualities and experience

- Someone who has pastored for 20+ years in North America or elsewhere and is now ready for his last 5-10+ year job in an international situation or
- A missionary wanting to move from the type of work they previously had been doing to now pastoring an international church or
- A recent seminary graduate who desires to both pastor and grow a church in an international location.
- Has international experience which is vitally important.
- Speaking Spanish would be a major benefit, or someone who could easily pick up the language.
- Adept at sermon preparation and preaching. (If there are two on-line sermons the search committee can review that would be great.)
- Experienced in worship service development.
- Comfortable with technology – computer, internet, cell phone, etc.
- Bible teacher from whom people love to learn.
- A proven love for understanding other cultures, with Latin American experience being appropriate.
- If the pastor's wife were to be on staff, she would organizationally report to him, and he in turn to the elders. Her involvement would be valuable and appreciated, but not expected.

Personal Qualities

- For both interpersonal relationships and leading others, this person should be strong in his EQ (Emotional Quotient). That means understanding what he is feeling, how he is coming across to the other person, discerning what that person is feeling and then adjusting his approach to relate to them in the most effective manner. "Knowing yourself" is crucial.
- Believing in the need for prayer, practicing it, and teaching on it.
- If not naturally an extrovert, this person must have learned to be one as there needs to be a desire and comfort level in meeting new people and developing new relationships. Networking on a consistent basis will be important for the growth of the church.
- The hours are "longish" you can anticipate 60+ hours a week. Beyond usual daytime hours, the role will require some evenings plus weekends. To be a workaholic would not honor God. There needs to be a balance between getting the job done and the attending to the needs of one's spouse and children, time with the Lord, and time for personal refreshing.

BELIEFS AND CHURCH CONSTITUTION

The name of this organization shall be “The Ixtapa Christian Fellowship.” Sister or daughter churches will take their own names.

The purposes of this organization shall be to encourage Christian worship, instruction, evangelism, and discipleship among the residents of this area and to provide and maintain suitable premises in which to meet.

The church shall be governed by a plurality of leaders with input from the congregation (where the congregation is defined as the people who believe in and have received the Lord Jesus Christ and who are committed to this fellowship). The Ixtapa Christian Fellowship acknowledges the Holy Scriptures (the Bible, both Old and New Testament, which we believe to be without error in the original autographs and true and authoritative in all areas on which it touches) as the only sufficient and reliable authority of faith and practice in the Christian life.

We stand firmly in the Reformation tradition, affirming the teachings of: “sola scriptura” (Scripture as our sole source of authority), “sola fe” (salvation is appropriated only by faith), and the priesthood of all believers. We accept the following creed as a basic summary of our faith, serving as it has for generations of Christians before us:

The Apostles Creed

We believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

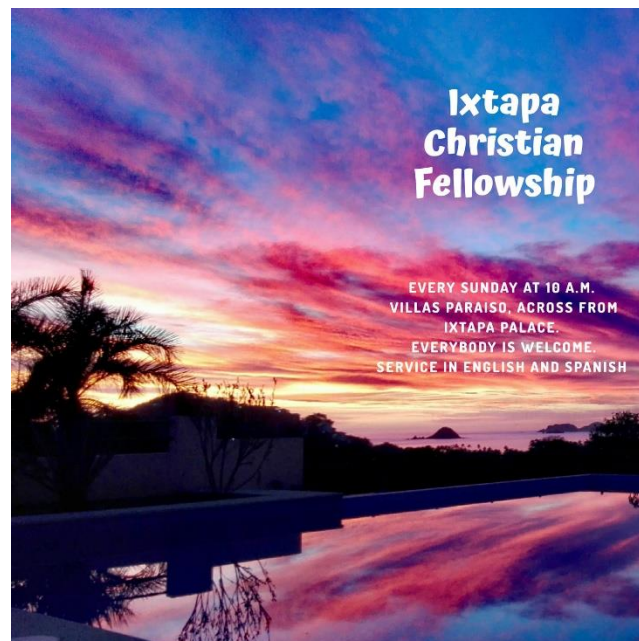
And Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried.

He descended into Sheol. The third day He rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy universal church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.



Timing and Process

This search is open ended. Hopefully, this pastor can be chosen and start before the end of 2021, but we are flexible. It is the intention of the search committee that not only will the selection seem right but that they will also have a sense from the Holy Spirit that transcends logic alone that this is God's person for this time.

Bruce Dingman, who has been to Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo and met with Ron and Rose is volunteering his services to assist in this pastoral search process. Feel free to contact Bruce at (818) 378-7755 or Bruce@dingman.com with any questions. The person in Ixtapa to contact is Ron Cavenagh at rcavenagh@gmail.com. The process will include asking for a thorough resume (we provide a resume guide), two online sermons (if possible), response to a questionnaire and a Zoom interview. If all goes well, then the next step would be a trip to Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo to meet with the search committee.

About Bruce Dingman

A professional search consultant for 30+ years, as an expat (and prior to being a headhunter) lived in Panama, Venezuela, and Brazil. Bruce has been to 59 countries, serves on two international missions boards, and has assisted 20 international churches over the past decade. Visit The Dingman Company website for more information.