

RELIGIOUS GROUPS IN COSTA RICA

Compiled by Clifton L. Holland
Director of PROLADES
(Revised Edition: January 30, 2000)

1. **Roman Catholic Church (RCC): the official State Religion.**

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1.1 General Information:

Central Seminary: 226-3135
Secretariat of the Episcopal Conference of Costa Rica: 221-6662
Webpage: www.mundilink.com/cecor/

1.2 Geographical divisions: 7 jurisdictions in the Ecclesiastic Province of Costa Rica with 236 parishes (parroquias), 515 secular priests (diocesanos) and 196 religious priests (religiosos).

- 1.2.1 Archdiocese of San José (diocese 1850, archdiocese 1921): Mons. Román Arrieta Villalobos (128 parroquias).
- 1.2.2 Diocese of Alajuela (1921): Mons. José Rafael Barquero Arce (31 parroquias).
- 1.2.3 Diocese of San Isidro de El General (1955): Mons. Ignacio Trejos Picado (22 parroquias).
- 1.2.4 Diocese of Tilarán (1961): Mons. Héctor Morera Vega (23 parroquias).
- 1.2.5 Diocese of Limón (Vicariato Apostólico, 1921; diocese, 1994): Mons. José Francisco Ulloa Rojas (23 parroquias).
- 1.2.6 Diocese of Ciudad Quesada (1995): Mons. Angel Sancasimiro Fernández (16 parroquias).
- 1.2.7 Diocese of Puntarenas (1998): Mons. Hugo Barrantes Ureña (16 parroquias).

1.3 Roman Catholic religious orders in Costa Rica:

1.3.1 Female religious orders:

Hermanas Bethlemitas: San Pedro de Montes de Oca, 234-0777.
Hermanas Carmelitas Descalzas: 228-1920.
Hermanas Contemplativas del Buen Pastor, Guadalupe: 224-6992.
Hermanas Cristianas de La Salle: 232-6427.
Hermanas Franciscanas de la Purísima, Cartago: 551-1523; Alajuela: 441-4693.
Hermanas Franciscanas de la Purísima, La Puebla de Heredia: 238-3215.
Hermanas Hijas de Nuestra Señora de los Desamparados, Escazú: 228-6595.
Hermanas Maristas, Alajuela: 441-0324.
Hermanas Misioneras Catequistas Lumen Christi, Alajuelita: 254-6280.
Hermanas Misioneras Clarisas del Santísimo Sacramento, Moravia: 235-5190.
Hermanas Misioneras de la Asunción, Calle Blancos: 235-0632.
Hermanas de Nuestra Señora del Sagrado Corazón, San Pablo de Heredia:
260-9579.
Hermanas Religiosas Franciscanas del Buen Samaritano, Piedades de Santa Ana:
282-7689.
Hermanas Religiosas de Sión, San José: 222-2070.
Hermanas Religiosas de Nuestra Señora de Sión: Coronado.
Hermanas Religiosas de la Madre del Divino Pastor: Guadalupe.

Hermanas Siervas de María Ministras de los Enfermos, Residencial Los Colegios: 236-5618.

Hermanas Terciarias Capuchinas, San Antonio de Belén: 239-2408.

Hermanas Terciarias Capuchinas de la Sagrada Familia, Barrio Córdova: 286-0157.

Madres Franciscanas de María Inmaculada: Moravia.

Madres Oblatas, Casa María Inmaculada, Gofito: 775-0067.

Madres Oblatas al Divino Amor: Moravia.

Misioneras Clarisas: San José y Guápiles.

Misioneras Clarisas del Séptimo Sacramento: San José

Misioneras Combonianas: San José

Misioneras Lumen Cristianas: Alajuelita.

Misioneras Madre Laura: San Vito de Coto Brus.

1.3.2 Male religious orders:

Misioneros de la Santísima Trinidad: Santo Domingo de Heredia.

Misioneros de Jesús Sacramentado: San Isidro de Heredia.

Padres Augustinos (1963), Alajuela: 441-1390.

Padres Capuchinos (1878), Cartago: 551-0834.

Padres Carmelitas Casa Santa Teresa (1952), San Ramón.

Padres Carmelitas Descalzos, San José.

Padres Claretianos (1953), San Francisco de Guadalupe: 222-5057.

Padres Combonianos (1979), Sagrada Familia de San José: 227-2753.

Padres Dominicicos (1896), San José: 221-8153.

Padres Escolarios (1961)

Padres Franciscanos Conventuales (1946), San Antonio de Belén: 239-0503.

Padres Franciscanos Observantes (1954)

Padres Jesuitas (1955): 225-4750.

Padres Josefinos (1980)

Padres Oratorianos Salesianos Don Bosco (1955), Zapote: 283-7548; San José: 222-2932.

Padres Pasionistas (1982)

Padres Paulinos (1897)

Padres Redentoristas (1985), Alajuela: 441-2370.

Padres Salesianos Don Bosco (1907), San José: 225-2396.

Padres Terciarios Capuchinos de Nuestra Señora de los Dolores (1979), Zapote: 253-5113 y 253-5132.

Padres Vicentianos C., Barrio Naciones Unidas y Ipís de Guadalupe: 227-4321.

Note: In 1986 there were 22 foreign priests serving in the Archdiocese of San José from the following countries: Spain (5), Cuba (4), El Salvador (4), Nicaragua (3), and one each from Guatemala, Czechoslovakia, Holland, China and Colombia (source: licenciante thesis of Dagoberto Nuñez Picado, 1987, National University of Heredia, page 72).

1.4 Catholic Charismatic Movement

1.4.1 National Coordination Office: Iglesia La Merced, San José

1.4.2 National Coordinator: Padre Miguel Hernández

1.4.3 Estimated size: 700,000-800,000 participants nationally (Jan. 2000)

2. Protestant Churches: see the latest Protestant denominational list compiled by PROLADES, which shows 181 distinct Protestant organizations in Costa Rica with related local congregations. The Protestant population in Costa Rica was estimated to be about 16% of the total population (July 1998). In addition to the Catholic Church and the various Protestant churches, the following religious groups are present in Costa Rica arranged by major categories (not over 5% of the total population).

3. Marginal Christian Groups (not part of the Protestant Movement):

- 3.1 Children of God/Niños de Dios (founded by Moses David), used to be seen regularly in downtown San José during the 1970s and 1980s, but may no longer exist in Costa Rica.
- 3.2 Christadelphians: c/o Francisco Ramírez, Apartado 146-3009, Santa Bárbara de Heredia; telephone: 269-9964.
- 3.3 Christian Science, Barrio Francisco Peralta, San José (United Church of Religious Science)
- 3.4 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons); phone: 253-5585, 224-4713, 234-1945 and 225-0208; Misión de San José: 234-1940; Apartado 2339-1000, San José.
- 3.5 Congregación MITA (founded in Puerto Rico in 1940 by Mrs. Juanita García Pérez, known as Mita = "Spirit of Life," who is considered to be the incarnation of the Holy Spirit), carretera periférica just west of the Rotonda de San Sabastian; call 286-0266 in San Sabastian.
- 3.6 Iglesia Dios es Amor, San José (founded in Sao Paulo, Brazil by David Miranda).
- 3.7 Iglesia Luz del Mundo (Light of the World Church, founded in Guadalajara, Mexico), carretera periférico west of Rotonda de San Sabastian, call 226-1713.
- 3.8 Jehovah's Witnesses: convention center and offices are located in La Asunción, San Antonio de Belén; call 239-2555; Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society in San José, Calle Central between Avenida 7 y 9; telephones: 221-1436 or 221-5843.
- 3.9 Unity Church in Escazú (Unity School of Christianity); 600 meters north of Tega; pastor Rita Marie Johnson; phone: 228-6051; e-mail: jet@cosricon.com
- 3.10 Unity in Christ International, Los Anonos de Escazú, 228-6805.
- 3.11 Unitarian-Universalists of Costa Rica (call Thomas Ryan: 231-4243).
- 3.12 Unification Church (Moonies): Federación de Familias para la Paz Mundial, contact: Teresa Peneda and Fernando Barrantes; claim to have about 113 families (Asoc. del Espíritu Santo para la Unificación del Mundo Cristiano: Apartado 5337-1000, San José).
- 3.13 Voz de la Piedra Angular (Voice of the Corner Stone), founded by William Soto Santiago in Puerto Rico); la Asoc. Juvenil Cultural Hombres y Mujeres del Futuro; Apartado 5718, San José (zipcode?): 225-7308, 286-0776; Internet: www.carpa.com
- 3.14 Zacarías Movement: founded by the prophet Zacarías Pérez Pérez; Iglesia Roca del Pedernal in Riojalandia de Barranca, Puntareas Province.

4. Non-Christian Religious Groups

- 4.1 Baha'i National Spiritual Assembly
(Bahá'u'llah = el prometido de todos los pueblos; prophet of the modern movement who lived from 1817-1892): 231-0647; meets in Residencial Carari (Monday), in Escazú (Friday), and in Heredia (last Sunday of the month); Baha'i Information Center, San José, Calle 22 and Avenda 4, call 222-5335; Apartado 553-1150, La Uruca.
- Instituto Baha'i Charles Wolcott, Pozos de Santa Ana: 282-8479.
- 4.2 Chinese groups:
- 4.2.1 Asociación Budhista de Lutolandia, Urb. La Geroma: 231-4200.
- 4.2.2 Asociación Cultural Tibetano-Costarricense (Tibetan Buddhist?); 258-0254; Fax 255-2783.
- 4.2.3 Chinese cultural centers:
- Asociación China de Costa Rica, Calle 25 #870, San José: 221-7813.
Asociación China de Limón, Calles 5-6 y Av. 3, Limón: 758-0124.
Asociación Chung Wah Chino, C. 2 y Av. 1, Puntarenas: 661-0284.
Asoc. de Residentes de Taiwan en Costa Rica, San José, Calle 13 y Avenida 2: tel. 233-9116.
Centro Cultural Chino Costarricense, Sabana Sur; tel. 290-1247.
- 4.2.4 Centro Creativo, on old road between Escazú and Santa Ana; 282-6556; Offers Osho Dynamic Meditation, T'ai Chi Ch'uan classes, Tui-Na Acumassage, and Holistic Health Services.
- 4.2.5 Escondidas Retreat Center, meets in 100-acre biological reserve, located 9 km. South of Dominical on the beach (Pacific Coast); offers classes en Chen-style Tai Chi, Chi Kung, massage and vegetarian cooking; call Patricia Mitchell at 771-1903.
- 4.2.6 Osho Meditation Center, therapist Jivan Madita, call 225-4139 or 285-0572.
- 4.2.7 T'ai Chi Ch'uan in Santa Ana and San José: call 224-6887.
- 4.2.8 Taoist Tai Chi Society: call 269-7019 (English) or 443-5836 (Spanish).
- 4.3 Japanese groups:
- 4.3.1 Asoc. Cultural Mokichi Okada de Costa Rica, Sabana norte: 220-4086.
- 4.3.2 Centro Cultural e Informativo del Japón, Centro Yoahan, tel. 233-7176.
- 4.4 Jewish congregations/groups:
- 4.4.1 Sinagoga Shaarei Zion (1955); Centro Israelita Sionista and escuela/colegio, Instituto Dr. Jaim Weizman, Calle 22 y Paseo Colón; Apartado 1473-1000, San José.
- 4.4.2 B'nai Israel (a reform Jewish community), holds services on Friday evening at 8:00 pm; tel. 257-1785 and 231-5243.

- 4.4.3 Congregation Beit Menachem (Rohmoser, next to Sigal's Hallmark); tel. 296-6565 (Rabbi Hersch Spalter or Chabad Lubavitch)
- 4.4.4 Congregación de Jahweh in Escazú (Messianic Jews); tel. 223-7759
- 4.4.5 Others?
- 4.5 Hindu groups:
- 4.5.1 Asociación Hindú-Costarricense (Gaudiya Math Internacional, founded by Sri Prabhupada Saraswate Thakur): Avenida 1, Cuesta de Nuñez, casa #1331, San José; Telephones: 257-7963 and 256-8650.
- 4.5.2 Asociación Superior de Cultura Hindú (Association of Higher Hindu Culture): Apartado 166-1002, Paseo de los Estudiantes, San José.
- 4.5.3 Centro de Información Krishnamurti ("filosofía de Jiddu Krishnamurti"); followers of Krishnamurti meet every Thursday at 4:00 pm at the Center; information: Lic. Jessie Montejo de Orlich, Tel. 225-0496.
- 4.5.4 Hare Krishna (International Society of Krishna Consciousness); Centro Cultural Govinda, Apartado 166-1002, San José; telephone: 223-5238; communal farm located a few miles east of Cartago, near Lankaster Gardens.
- 4.5.5 Holy Mother Ammachi Cult (Holy Mother of Love and Compassion with international headquarters in Kerala, India), taught by Swami Ramakrishnananda, a disciple of Mataji Amritanandamayi; ashram in Playa Negra de Talamanca, on the Caribbean coast; telephone 750-1877, 750-0082 (also known as AMMA).
- 4.5.6 Instituto para la Promoción de la Salud; el Instituto Prana y el Centro de Sanación Pranic de Bogotá, Colombia (Sanación Pranic/Pranic Healing/Prana Yoga); Dr. Santiago Aviles Lee; telephone, 231-0267 and Fax: 232-4682; Internet: temporales.cool.co.cr; e-mail: iprana@racsaco.cr
- 4.5.7 Meditación Transcendental (TM = Transcendental Meditation; Japa Yoga), San José; Dr. Carlos Manuel Quirce Balma; beginning in the 1970s, this group started by holding public conferences in meeting rooms at various hotels in San José.
- 4.5.8 Vaisnava Mission, c/o Shankarshana Das Brahmacari; Apartado 10561-1000, San José; Telephone: 258-3230.
- 4.5.9 Vedismo: Bhakti Vidagdha Bhagwat Swami, Tel. 289-9822 (Ana Carmona), 289-9287 (Guiselle Figueroa).
- 4.6 Yoga groups (Form of Hinduism):
- 4.6.1 AHIMSA Yoga School: 150 meters west of Parque Juan Santamaría in Galería Expresión, Hospital Veterinario, 2nd floor, in Alajuela.
- 4.6.2 Centro Cultural Bhaktivedanda, Barrio Córdova, San José, Tel. 227-4505.
- 4.6.2 Escuela Yoga de Moravia, Ada Luz de Lake (en 1980 estaba escribiendo un libro sobre Yoga en Costa Rica)

- 4.6.4 Escuela Yoga de San Pedro de Montes de Oca, Luisita de Scriba
- 4.6.5 Gnana Yoga, AMHA Costa Rica: Apartado 1936-1002, Costa Rica (Barrio Luján, 50 sur agencia Banco Costa Rica), Tel. 238-5282 and 233-6392.
- 4.6.6 Kripalu Yoga in Santa Ana; call Ani for directions: 282-8769.
- 4.6.7 New Yoga Center of Ananda Marga, Barrio Otoya, 100 meters east and 100 meters south of Condovac La Costa offices; call 285-4339.
- 4.6.8 Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy (same as Kripalu Yoga in Santa Ana)
- 4.6.8 Raja Yoga Meditation, Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University; 929 Calle 9 at Avenue 9, 50 metros north of Hotel Don Carlos, San José; telephone 221-0009.
- 4.6.10 Master Ching Hai Meditation Association (Taiwan: Shabd Yoga, Sant Mat) -- see Melton #1959 Listed in Index under Missions--Costa Rica; eliotg@racsa.co.cr
- 4.7 Native American Indian religions: Shamanism & Animism
 - 4.7.1 Borucas (Boruca y Curre, Puntarenas Province)
 - 4.7.2 Bribrís (4 locations in southern Puntarenas Province)
 - 4.7.3 Cabécares (many locations, mainly in the Talamanca mountains of Cartago, San José and Limón Provinces)
 - 4.7.4 Chorotegas (Matambu de Nicoya, Guanacaste Province)
 - 4.7.4 Guymías (Coto Brus, Abrojo Montezuma, Osa and Conte Burica in Puntarenas Province)
 - 4.7.6 Huétares (Quitirrisí and Zapatón in the Province of San José)
 - 4.7.7 Malekus (Guatuso, northern Alajuela Province)
- 4.8 Santería, Vudu (voodoo), Myalism, Zion Rivalism, etc., among West Indians (Afro-Americans) mainly on the Caribbean coast.
- 4.9 Witchcraft (brujería), astrology and other occult practices among Spanish-speaking Costa Ricans:
 - 4.9.1 Escazú is believed to have many such groups: see Biesanz' book, chapter IX, "La Religión," pages 493-499, *Ocultismo y brujería* in **Los Costarricenses** (San Jose: UNED, 1979).
 - 4.9.2 Numerous fortune-tellers, psychics, and astrologers who advertise their services in local newspapers and magazines (especially in **La República**).
 - 4.9.3 Occult bookstores:
 - Librería Nueva Era, San José: calle central y avenida 12 y 14; tel. 233-6501.
 - Librería Ocultista, San José: avenida 12 entre calle central y 1; tel. 221-5167.
 - 4.9.3 Cult of Dr. Ricardo Moreno Cañas: some older Costa Ricans believe that the spirit of the dead medical doctor (killed in 1938) can be evoked by prayers and candles to heal sick people today (see **La Nación, Revista Dominical**, August 23, 1998, pp. 12-15)
 - 4.9.4 Satanist groups: **La Nación** reported on January 16, 1999 that police had identified the existence of a Satanic sect (secta satánica) of about 30 teenagers that had conducted occult practices in neighborhoods on the south-side of San José: principally in Alajuelita,

Tejarcillos and Hatillo 6 and nearby uninhabited mountain areas. Several members of this sect were arrested for desecrating the cemetery of Alajuelita and robbing bones and skulls from about 100 graves during early January. These human remains were used by the youths in Satanic rituals in nearby mountain areas. The members of this sect usually wear black T-shirts with an upside-down cross and are devoted to heavy-metal music, songs and literature with Satanic references. This group has been known to exist since 1992, according to the authorities.

- 4.10 Other religious groups (Ancient Wisdom, Islam, Metaphysical, New Age, etc):
- 4.10.1 Asociación Gran Fraternidad Universal, Misión de la Orden de Acuarios del Dr. Serge Raynaud (Universal Grand Fraternity, Mission of the Order of Aquarius, founded by Dr. Serge Raynaud de la Ferriere in Venezuela in 1948); 50 meters west of restaurante La Chosa del Indio, Sabanilla, Montes de Oca; Telephone: 232-7859 (Note: Melton calls this group the "Universal Great Brotherhood"-- see Fifth Edition of EAR, #1584).
- 4.10.2 Asociación Fraternidad Místicos Cristianos Rosacruz (Ancient & Mystical Order of the Rosae Crucis): Apartado 1350-1011, Y Griega, San José.
- 4.10.3 Asociación Hermandad Rosacruz (Brotherhood of the Rosae Crucis/ Fraternitas Rosae Crucis), San José, frente a la antigua Cervecería Troube.
- 4.10.4 Asociación Movimiento Gnóstico Universal (Universal Gnostic Movement), Heredia, Calle 7 y Av. 6 y 8: Tel. 260-4413.
- 4.10.5 BioEnergy ("Bioenergética = la medicina del siglo XXI, manos que curan"): Zapote, 75 metros sur de CORTEL, contigua a la pulpería La Guaria; telephone: 224-6800.
- 4.10.6 Center for Attitudinal Healing (Unity/New Age?); course in Miracles in San Pedro; call Dennis or Violette at 224-7843; uses John Bradshaw videos.
- 4.10.7 Centro Nueva Acropolis, Barrio Santa Teresita, San José; de la Iglesia Santa Teresita, 500 este y 50 al norte, casa #945; Tel. 223-1376; Apartado 7398, San José. (Note: founded in 1957 in Argentina by Angel Livraga and his wife, Ada Albrecht, who created the New Acropolis Foundation, which is now an international organization with centers in more than 30 countries of Latin America and Europe; its ideology is a mixture of esoterics, theosophy, orientalism, alchemy, astrology and Greek philosophy.)
- 4.10.8 Iglesia Gnóstica de Costa Rica (Gnostic Church of San José), San José, Calle 3 - 3B y Avenida 13B; telephone: 222-0598.
- 4.10.9 Instituto Tecnológico de Dianética, related to L. Ron Hubbard, founder of the Church of Scientology (Los Angeles, CA); Barrio Los Yoses, 200 este y 100 sur del Automercado; telephone, 224-1696 and fax: 280-8745.
- 4.10.10 Siloismo (founded by Mario Rodríguez Cobo = "Silo"); after 1969 several networks were founded of this group in Costa Rica; more recently, this movement has become known as the Humanist Party.
- 4.10.11 Silva Mind Control (Control Mental Silva with international headquarters in Mexico City, also known as "El Metodo Silva de Superación Personal"); central offices are located in La Uruca: 200 metros sur de la Canada Dry; Tel. 232-4506

y 232-2750; Apartado 58, La Uruca; Lic. Luis Roberto Vaglio.

4.10.12 Subud de Costa Rica (Islam); c/o William M. Quirós, Apartado 711-3000, Heredia;
Telephone: 239-9446; Fax: 237-0179.

4.10.13 Theosophical Society (near old US Military Mission bldg, Avenida 1, Cuesta de
Moras, San José)

NOTE: Most of the religious groups listed above can be found in Dr. J. Gordon Melton's
Encyclopedia of American Religions (fifth edition, Gale Research, 1996).

(Revised January 30, 2000)