



Headquarters office of the Western Pacific Union Mission, Honiara, Solomon Islands.

Photo courtesy of Silent Tovosia.

Western Pacific Union Mission

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Barry Oliver, Ph.D., retired in 2015 as president of the South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists, Sydney, Australia. An Australian by birth Oliver has served the Church as a pastor, evangelist, college teacher, and administrator. In retirement, he is a conjoint associate professor at Avondale College of Higher Education. He has authored over 106 significant publications and 192 magazine articles. He is married to Julie with three adult sons and three grandchildren.

The Western Pacific Union Mission (WPUM) existed between 1972 and 2000. It was a constituent union of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and was part of the South Pacific Division of the General Conference (SPD). Its headquarters when dissolved were in Honiara, Solomon Islands.¹

The Territory and Statistics of the Western Pacific Union Mission

The territory of the Western Pacific Union Mission was “Kiribati, Nauru, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu; comprising the Eastern Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Malaita, Vanuatu, and Western Solomon Islands Missions.”² The administrative office of the Western Pacific Union Mission was at Palm Drive, Lunga, Honiara, Solomon Islands, on the southern outskirts of the nation’s capital. The postal address was P.O. Box R145, Ranandi, Honiara, Solomon Islands.³

In the *2000 Annual Statistical Report of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists*, the Western Pacific Union Mission was listed as having 231 organized churches and 368 companies. Church membership at the end of 1999 was 45,950. The union had 852 active employees. Its tithe receipts for 1999 totaled US\$1,499,331. Its tithe and offerings per capita were US\$38.94.⁴

The Institutions of the Mission

Atoifi Adventist Hospital.⁵ Located at East Kwaio on the southern coast of the island of Malaita, Solomon Islands, the hospital was opened and dedicated on August 25, 1966.⁶ Three missionaries have lost their lives in tragic circumstances at Atoifi: Brian Dunn,⁷ Lens Larwood,⁸ and Lance Gersback.⁹ In 2018 the hospital had 78 beds.¹⁰ A School of Nursing as an affiliated campus of Pacific Adventist University is located at the hospital!¹¹

The History of the Development of the Solomon Islands Mission Structure

Until 1949 all of the local conference and mission entities in the Australasian Union Conference related directly to the union with headquarters in Sydney. But at a specially called session of the Australasian Union between August 16 and 21, 1948, a proposal for a major reorganization was approved. Australia and New Zealand were divided between two union conferences known as the Trans-Tasman Union Conference and the Trans-Commonwealth Union Conference. The mission territories were divided into two union missions known as the Coral Sea Union Mission and the Central Pacific Union Mission.¹²

Central Pacific Union Mission

When established in 1949, the Central Pacific Union Mission included the New Hebrides, New Caledonia, Fiji, the Gilbert and Ellice groups, the Cook Islands, Samoa, Niue, Nauru, Society Islands, and Pitcairn.¹³ Thus, these entities were now directly administered by an entity that had not previously existed: the Central Pacific Union Mission. This allowed for a much more consultative approach. Whereas previously the relationship was directly to an entity in Australia, now the relationship was directly to an entity in the Pacific itself. The headquarters of the union were in Fiji rather than Sydney, Australia.

Bismark Solomons Union Mission

In 1953 the territory of the Coral Sea Union Mission was divided into a Coral Sea Union Mission and a Bismarck-Solomons Union Mission.¹⁴ The Coral Sea Union Mission continued to have its headquarters in Lae, New Guinea. The reorganized union now had as its territory "Papua and the mainland of the Mandated Territory of New Guinea; comprising the Central Papuan, Eastern Highlands, Eastern Papuan, Madang, Morobe, Sepik, Papuan Gulf, Western Highlands, and Western Papuan Missions."¹⁵ The Bismarck-Solomons Union had its headquarters in Rabaul on the island of New Britain. Its territory was "Admiralty Islands, St. Matthias Group, New Hanover, New Ireland and adjacent islands, New Britain and adjacent islands, Bougainville and adjacent islands, and the British Solomon Islands Protectorate ; comprising the Bougainville, Eastern Solomon Islands, Malatia, Manus, New Britain, New Ireland, and Western Solomon Islands missions."¹⁶

Western Pacific Union Mission

In 1972 there was yet another reorganization of the union missions in the Australasian Division. A Western Pacific Union Mission was organized, bringing together parts of the former Bismarck-Solomons Union Mission and the Central Pacific Union Mission. A Central Pacific Union Mission remained, but it was now reconstituted and the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Mission was now a part of the Western Pacific Union Mission. The headquarters for the new Western Pacific Union Mission were in Honiara in the Solomon Islands.¹⁷ The territory of the union mission remained stable throughout the 28 years of its existence.

Trans-Pacific Union Mission

In 2000 another major reorganization of the unions in the South Pacific Division occurred at the South Pacific Division session.¹⁸ This change involved all of the unions, not just the union missions, as was the case in 1972. The total number of unions in the division was reduced from five to four. A union mission comprising the territory of the former Western Pacific Union and much of the territory of the former Central Pacific Union Mission, initially designated as the Western Pacific Union Mission but shortly thereafter designated as the Trans-Pacific Union Mission, was formed. The former Central Pacific Union Mission was dissolved, and the former Western Pacific Union Mission was dissolved.¹⁹ The new Trans-Pacific Union Mission had its headquarters in the same place as the former Central Pacific Union Mission: Tamavua, Suva, Fiji.²⁰

Executive Officers of the Western Pacific Union Mission

Presidents: Gordon A. Lee (1972–1974); David E. Hay (1975–1980); Rex V. Moe (1980–1985); John R. Lee (1985–1990); Colin M. Winch (1990–1992); Calvyn A. Townend (1993–1996); Neil W. Watts (1997–2000).

Secretaries: W. T. Andrews (1972–1973); Keith M. Hughes (1974–1977); Alan R. Butler (1978–1979); Barry I. Peach (1980–1982); D. B. Mitchell (1983–1985); Wilfred Nilly (1985–1990); Piuki Tasa (1990–1995); Lawrence Tanabose (1995–2000).

Treasurers: W. T. Andrews (1972–1973); Keith M. Hughes (1974–1977); Alan R. Butler (1978–1979); Barry I. Peach (1980–1982); D. B. Mitchell (1983–1985); Leon E. Olsen (1985–1990); David R. Potter (1990–1992); John E. Allum (1993–1996); Neville Sawert (1997–1998); Mark Pannekeok (1999–2000).

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NOTES

1. Unless otherwise credited, much of the information in this article comes from the personal knowledge of the author, who was the general secretary of the South Pacific Division between 1997 and 2007 and the president of the South Pacific Division between 2007 and 2015.
2. "Western Pacific Union Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, 300, accessed February 14, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB2000.pdf>.
3. Ibid.
4. *2000 Annual Statistical Report of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists for 1999*, accessed February 20, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR2000.pdf>.
5. See Atoifi Adventist Hospital, Solomon Islands.
6. A. R. Mitchell, "Opening of Atoifi Adventist Hospital, Malaita," *Australasian Record*, January 23, 1967, 1, 2.
7. See Dunn, Brian.

8. See Larwood, Lens.
9. See Gersback, Lance.
10. "Atoifi Adventist Hospital," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, 695, accessed May 31, 2019,
<http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB2017.pdf>.
11. Kent Kingston, "New Leader Appointed for Pacific Adventist University," *Record*, December 3, 2016, 3.
12. "Coral Sea Union Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, 78, accessed February 14, 2020,
<http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1950.pdf>.
13. H. E. Piper, "Special Session, Australasian Union Conference," *Australasian Record*, September 13, 1948, 2, 3.
14. "Bismarck Solomons Union Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, 83, accessed February 14, 2020,
<http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1954.pdf>.
15. "Coral Sea Union Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, 89, accessed February 14, 2020,
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16. "Bismarck Solomons Union Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, 83, accessed February 14, 2020,
<http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1954.pdf>.
17. R. R. Frame, "Mission Field Reorganisation," *Australasian Record*, April 24, 1972, 1.
18. Bruce Manners, "Session Votes for Restructure," *Record*, November 25, 2000, 8, 9.
19. Ibid.; "Trans-Pacific Union Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, accessed February 14, 2020,
<http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB2002.pdf>.
20. Personal knowledge of the author as the former president of the South Pacific Division.

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