



Central Brazil Conference headquarters.

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Central Brazil Conference

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Joyce Honorato

Central Brazil Conference (ABC) is an administrative unit of the Seventh-day Adventist Church located in the territory of West Central Brazil Union (UCOB). Its headquarters is located at Avenida Caiapó, 800, Setor Santa Geneveva, zip code 74672-400, in the city of Goiânia, in the state of Goiás, Brazil.

Central Brazil Conference administrates churches of counties in the state of Goiás, except for some micro regions such as Chapada dos Veadeiros [Veadeiros Plateau], Vão do Paraná [Paraná Small Valley], and the surrounding area of the city of Brasília. Surrounding the Federal District this unit also covers congregations in the cities of Abadânia, Alexânia, Corumbá de Goiás, Cocalzinho de Goiás, and Pirenópolis.¹

The conference has 27,918 baptized members, 46 districts, 154 organized churches, and 171 groups registered,² all in a territory of 340,106,492 km²,³ with a population of 6,677,697 inhabitants.⁴ The average is one Adventist per 239 inhabitants.

In the territory of Central Brazil Conference there are nine Adventist schools, all located in the state of Goiás⁵ totaling 5,419 students. These include Goianense Adventist Academy, with 729 students, established in 1976; Novo Mundo Adventist Academy, with 937 students, established in 1973; Setor Pedro Ludovico Adventist Academy, with 842 students, established in 1974; Jardim Europa Adventist Academy, with 442 students, established in 1984; Vila Nova Adventist School, with 442 students, established in 1997. These five academies are located in the city of Goiânia. There is also Rio Verde Adventist School, located in the city of Rio Verde with 374 students, established in 1977; Uruaçu Adventist School, established in Uruaçu, with 94 students, founded in 1972; Porangatu Adventist School, based in the city of Porangatu, with 258 students, founded in 1988; and Doutor Amadeus Machado Adventist School, in the city of Anápolis, with 1,262 students, founded in 1947.

In 2019, the field had 59 active pastors: 44 ordained ministers and 15 licensed. Of that total, 47 work in districts or as auxiliaries, three are pastors in schools, and nine work as administrators and department leaders.⁶

More than 2,000,000 people have access to Hope Channel Brazil in the state of Goiás through an open signal present in 14 cities, including the capital, Goiânia, with 1,500,000 inhabitants.⁷

In this region, the history of the conference began in the 1910s, spanning over a century, since the first Adventists arrived in the state of Goiás. In the following you will learn more about the early days of Central Brazil Conference, its pioneers, and how the Adventist message spread to the point where it was necessary to establish this administrative unit.

Origin of Seventh-day Adventist Work in the Conference's Territory

The message of the Adventist Church arrived in the state of Goiás when Jualino Marques and Eudózio Mamede received by mail the Review "O Atalaia" [The Watchtower]. From this reading they converted to Adventism and were baptized on November 29, 1924. At the time, there was no systematized evangelism plan directed specifically to this region in the country.⁸

In 1926, two years after those two young men read the Review that changed their lives, the Adventist Carlos Heinrich arrived in the city of Vianópolis. He was a German graduated in medicine and theology in his country and with evangelistic experience in Europe. Heinrich came to Brazil with the dream of being a missionary, and later, pioneering Goiás. He stayed in the city for a few months and then left for Niquelândia, where 25 people were baptized as a result of his work. An Adventist school was also founded, whose teacher was Maria Heinrich, the missionary's wife. His dream was to evangelize the Carajás Indians and among his purposes "was the teaching about proper land grabbing, the best use of natural soil resources, healthy habits and health care."⁹

In one of his trips in 1928, Dr. Carlos came to a place called Fazenda Riachão [Riachão Farm], in Uruaçu, which had fertile land, water, and food for animals. He saw in that land resources for possible exchanges and a guarantee of progress. The Brazilian Adventist Church was aware of the beginnings of preaching work in Goiás and the SBU (South Brazil Union) subsequently sent Pastor Alvin Nathan Allen and his wife Luella Allen to work on that farm. Dr. Carlos stayed in the region for some time, possibly at the farm, where he afterward founded the church Fazenda Riachão approximately one year later, known today as the Pioneers Church, which conducts a camp meeting each year in July as a memorial of those events.¹⁰

Pastor Allen and his wife worked from 1927 to 1938 in the region of the Araguaia River, which inspired the name of the mission. However, they left for USA without seeing any baptisms. Later, the couple Calebe and Abigail Pinho continued the work and witnessed the baptism of many people. Joel Karajá was the first native from Bananal Island (previously belonging to the state of Goiás, and currently belonging to the state of Tocantins) to become an Adventist in the 1970s. Due to the missionary work of the Pinho couple converts stopped smoking, drinking, eating Bible forbidden foods, and practicing their religious rituals. The National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) interpreted this as a disfigurement of indigenous culture and the couple was obliged to leave the village in 1977. The work was continued by the native Antônio Tewahura.¹¹

Conference Organizational History

The history of the Central Brazil Conference began in 1928, when it was founded as the Araguaia Indian Mission.¹² In that year, the institution was administrated by South Brazil Union (SBU). To help with the establishment of the new mission, Adventist youths appointed a target of five thousand réis to finance it (approximately US \$1,538.46). This target was soon achieved with the help of the offerings from South American Missionary Volunteers (MV), which were destined to start the work in that region of Brazil. As Carlos Heinrich worked in the territory, SBU sent Pastor Allen, a Bible teacher with many years of experience among the indigenous in Peru,

accompanied by his wife.¹³

In the first year of the work, the Araguaia River region was explored, and several visits were made to indigenous villages in small canoes. Good relations were established with the Carajás Indians, and on January 2, 1928, SBU voted for Pastor Allen to go to work in the region as president of the Araguaia Indian Mission.¹⁴ The work field of this mission was Bananal Island in Tocantins, as well as the states of Goiás and Mato Grosso. The couple went to the island "in order to start a ministry with the natives" and faced difficulties there, primarily health problems which left Luella Allen debilitated, and cultural differences between the Americans and the natives. In 1938 the couple Allen returned to the U.S.A. without seeing any baptisms, although the seeds had been consistently planted. After some years, in 1970, the couple Calebe and Abigail Pinho took over the job in the region and after four years conducted the first baptisms of indigenous peoples.¹⁵

Araguaia Indian Mission, Pastor Alvin Nathan Allen, and seven Adventist members from the territory of Goiânia (among 25 people who were baptized in 1929) are cited for the first time in the 1929 Yearbook.¹⁶ Two years later, when its name changed to Goiás Mission, it reported 42 members and one church when the population in the entire state of Goiás was 600,000 inhabitants.¹⁷

In 1931, a record indicates that the Araguaia Indigenous School in Goiás was in operation. The number of students totaled 36 and, among these, 24 were Carajás Indians. In 1933, the Piedade School (Goiás) had one teacher, however it closed in 1935 together with Fontoura School (Tocantins).¹⁸ In 1940, the schools of Jaraguá, Rio Verde, Riachão, Goiânia, and Cuiabá were established. In that same year, for the first time, Pastor Rodolpho Belz assumed the South Union Education Department, who was succeeded in 1943 by Pastor Renato Emir Oberg.¹⁹

In 1938, the Araguaia Indian Mission changed its name to Goiano Mineira Mission, and included, in addition to Goiás, the region of Minas Gerais Triangle.²⁰ Around 1965 and 1966, Minas Triangle was disbanded, and Goiano Mineira Mission changed its status to Central Brazil Mission,²¹ also covering the Federal District with the city of Brasília inaugurated in 1960. The population of the entire territory increased to 3,500,000 inhabitants, including eight churches and 3,028 members.²² In 1964, the first school of Taguatinga arose in the Federal District.²³

Shortly thereafter, Central Brazil Mission acquired a 500,000 m² property donated by the estate agency Itacolomy, near Brasília, Federal District, for the permanent headquarters of the "MV" camps. On Easter week 1970, the "MVs" opened the cafeteria with the help of Pastor Roberto L. Chase, "MV" leader of this mission, and his uncle Dr. Yakima. At the time, an appeal was also made by the President of Central Brazil Mission, Darci M. Borba, to build houses to support each "MV" society.²⁴

In 1978, the conference changed its headquarters to street 75, 400, at Setor Central in the city of Goiânia.²⁵ Soon after, with the creation of Central Planalto Conference (CPC), the field was again divided and, thus, some cities of the state of Goiás and the Federal District were under the administration of CPC. Finally, it was voted on July 30, 1982, at the Inaugural Session of the Nineteenth Triennial Assembly of Central Brazil Mission, the change of

status from Central Brazil Mission to Central Brazil Conference, a name that stands to the present.²⁶ The Assembly Session was opened by Pastor Darci Borba, President of South Brazil Union at the time. There were 77 people present at the meeting.

In 1984, two landmark events took place in Central Brazil Conference's history: on April 8, the cornerstone of the "MV" camp headquarters was laid.²⁷ On June 24, Central Brazil Conference's official headquarters was inaugurated at a ceremony attended by Pastor Neal Wilson, president of the Adventist World Church at the time, as well as other SDA leaders and state representative Ildefonso Avelar de Carvalho, representing the governor from the state of Goiás, Iris Rezende Machado.²⁸ In addition, from November 25 to 28, "the workers of Central Brazil Conference met in council to draw up plans for the Thousand Days of Harvest."²⁹

Another important Central Brazil Conference event was the acquisition of a farm in 1981 to implement Central Brazil Academy (CBA), an institution located in the same territory. On December 8, 1985, CBA was officially inaugurated, although it had been operating since the beginning of the year with 250 students. Later, some under graduate courses were transferred to the school from Brazil College in São Paulo, currently Brazil Adventist University.³⁰ The academy library, named Pastor Jorge Hoyle, was inaugurated on June 4, 1990, with two thousand volumes.³¹

In 1986, there was another reorganization of the IASD in Brazil and Central Brazil Conference became part of the territory of the Brazilian Central Union (CBU).³² In the same year some land was acquired in the city of Piracanjuba to build a church. Approximately two years later, on March 26, 1988, the church was inaugurated with a capacity of 250 people.³³

Besides the construction, the year 1988 was marked by the advancement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the state and the holding of various events, such as the "National 89" Festival (evangelistic campaign), with the presence of leaders of South American Division and the General Conference, with two thousand Bibles and 600 leaders invested with the seal of the event. More than 1,000 students enrolled in the "How to quit smoking in five days" course at Central SDA of Goiania, from June 13 to 18; and the Youth Service congress, sponsored by the New Town district, had the goal of reaching the region, an event that eventually became a large statewide program.³⁴

Until 1994, Central Brazil Conference had registered 97 churches and 30,345 members within an estimated population of 7,451,933 people. Its territory of operation still included the Federal District and the state of Tocantins.³⁵ That year was considered the official family year and, for that reason, the conference sought to strengthen Christian ties by holding 32 couples meetings, four bridal courses, and four family life seminars, with a special closing of the theme on November 4 and 5.³⁶ In 1995, the conference administrated only churches in the state of Goiás. Consequently, the number of churches increased to 55, and members to 15,113, with an estimated population in the territory of 4,183,127.³⁷ In 2005, West Central Brazil Union was founded and Central Brazil Conference became part of this new administrative unit.³⁸

Throughout its history, Central Brazil Conference has been engaged in the mission of bringing the Advent message to all people in its region. Two assistance points help the community in their specific localities. One is the Project AMAR [acronym that forms the word “love” in Portuguese], located in the city of Aparecida de Goiânia, in Setor Tiradentes. This program was inaugurated in 2006 and serves an average of 230 children in a social risk situation. The other Project AME+ (acronym that means “love more”) located in the city of Pires do Rio, alongside the church Tancredo Neves was inaugurated in 2007 and serves an average of 18 people of different ages with special needs. This project depends on donations and is recognized by the municipality and population of the city.³⁹

Further actions were held in the territory of Central Brazil Conference, similar to those of Novo Mundo Adventist School, in Goiânia, which was the first to adhere to the environmental project “Eyes on the oil,” in 2012. This program encourages students to take oil used at home to school to be recycled.⁴⁰ That same year and in the same city, young people engaged in the “Do good, what is the harm?” project and rebuilt a house that had damp walls and ceiling, replacing them with brick walls.⁴¹ All these activities go hand-in-hand with evangelism. In the 2015 church planting program, “During one of the editions of Camping Riachão, people were challenged to adopt cities without an Adventist presence in the state.” The plan was for each person to choose a separate flag with the name of a city and make the effort to plant a church there.⁴²

On World Adventist Youth Day in 2017, as well as handing out the Hope Impact project⁴³ mission books, leaflets, and water for commuters, most congregations mobilized believers to donate blood.⁴⁴ In 2018, Central Brazil Conference participated in the project “Together,” launched by West Central Brazil Union. The purpose of the program was to disciple young people so that those more experienced in church activities could teach and motivate them to be part of the mission of the Church.⁴⁵

With its organizational structure, Central Brazil Conference leaders and members have worked in every possible way to meet the needs of the Goiás region. Their efforts have helped fulfill the mission of the Church, spreading the gospel in its vast state. “As one of the oldest Conferences, through the process of multiplication, it has given birth to other fields in the Midwest region of the country and is now preparing itself with great strides so that it can happen again, by the grace of God.”⁴⁶

From all of their experiences over time, many important lessons have been learned. One of them was to “create a healthy and friendly organizational culture before proposing growth measures.” Another fundamental point is the relationship with citizens of Goiás, because one must be valued as an individual in order to feel loved. In this way it is possible to captivate them, and by respecting them to lead them to believe in Jesus.⁴⁷

As successful as the past has been, “there are about 60 small towns with no Adventist presence that need to be reached with the gospel message, and many large cities with little Adventist presence.”⁴⁸ These are some of the main challenges of the Church in this region in Brazil.

Looking to the future, Central Brazil Conference leaders have dreams and projects to spread the gospel message. “Among many actions, a project for the planting of 100 new discipleship churches was launched over the last four years.” The field outlined its strategy based on Jesus' guidance that the gospel should be preached in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Therefore, “the strategy is to start from the central region to the most distant in the state. In other words, the big cities of the state are being adopted as priorities so that from there they can reach the smaller cities at the ends of the state.”⁴⁹

Chronology of Administrative Officers⁵⁰

Presidents: A. N. Allen (1928-1932); E. H. Wilcox (1933-1937); Alex. J. Reisig (1938); Quirino Dau (1939-1941); Nelson Shwantes (1941-1942); Manoel Margarido (1943-1946); Arnaldo Rutz (1947-1955); Paulo Seid (1955-1959); Lourival Ferreira (1960-1962); Wilson Sarli (1963-1969); Darcy Barbosa (1969-1972); David Moroz (1973-1978); Rodolpho Gorski (1978-1980); Luiz Fukner (1981-1985); Osmundo Santos (1986-1987); Homero Reis (1987-1993); Manoel Xavier (1993-1994); Dimas Artiaga (1994-2001); Otavio Costa (2001-2005); David Sabino (2006-2011); Jairo Torres (2011-2012); Walmir Arantes (2012-2016); Fábio Lúcio Rento Dias (2016-today).

Secretaries: D. Stockler (1938-1940); Silvestre Toddai (1941); Waldemar Ehlers (1943-1944); C. P. Cunha (1945-1948); Roberto Doehnert (1949-1954); Hugo Gegembauer (1955-1956); Leontino Ramalho (1958-1962); Holbert Schmidt (1963-1966); R. H. Nagel (1967-1968); H. W. Wichert (1969-1971); G. A. Martins (1972-1977); Vilfredo Doerner (1978-1980); Alcy F. de Oliveira (1981-1985); Lucas da Silva (1986); Jose Rosa (1987-1994); Jurandir de Oliveira (1995-1996); Edmar R. Martins (1997); Urias P. Chagas (1998-2000); Wagne dos S. Mesquita (2001); Jose Pereira dos Santos (2002-2005); Juracy Santiago Castelo (2006-2013); Evaldino Jose A. Ramos (2014-2015); Francisco das Chagas de A. Sousa (2016-today).

Treasurers: D. Stockler (1938-1940); Silvestre Toddai (1941); Waldemar Ehlers (1943-1944); C. P. Cunha (1945-1948); Roberto Doehnert (1949-1954); Hugo Gegembauer (1955-1956); Leontino Ramalho (1958-1962); Holbert Schmidt (1963-1966); R. H. Nagel (1967-1968); H. W. Wichert (1969-1971); G. A. Martins (1972-1977); Vilfredo Doerner (1978-1980); Alcy F. de Oliveira (1981-1985); Lucas da Silva (1986-1992); Jurandir de Oliveira (1993-1996); Edmar R. Martins (1997-2001); Wilmar Tadeu P. Cavalcanti (2002-2005); Avelino Martins (2006); Anilson Seemund Soares (2007-2014); Rogerio Jose de Souza (2015-today).⁵¹

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51. More information about Central Brazil Conference can be found on the website: ABC.adventistas.org, on social media - Facebook: Adventists Goiás, or on Twitter: @comunicABC.

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