



Central Planalto Conference headquarters, 2019.

Photo courtesy of Central Planalto Conference Archives.

# Central Planalto Conference

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The Central Planalto Conference (APlaC) is an administrative unit of the Seventh-day Adventist Church located in the territory of the West Central Brazil Union (UCOB). Its headquarters is located between blocks 7/8 (EQRSW 7/8), Lot 02 of the Southwest Sector of Brasilia, zip code 70.675-760, Federal District, Brazil!<sup>1</sup>

This administrative unit is responsible for leading in the advancement of Adventist mission in the Federal District and some municipalities in the state of Goiás, including some cities located in the Chapada dos Veadeiros and Vão do Paranã microregions and part of the surroundings of Brasília. In total, APlAC's territory comprises an area of 82,919,900 km,<sup>2</sup> which houses a population of about 3,735,507 inhabitants, of whom 31,219 are Adventists. These members are spread out into 275 congregations (161 organized churches and 114 groups) and 50 districts. There is currently an average of one Adventist per 119 inhabitants.<sup>2</sup>

Approximately 6,300 children and teenagers in the region are served by Adventist education through the eight school units in APlAC territory. These students are distributed in the following educational institutions: Gama Adventist Academy, located in the Gama Administrative Region (RA), founded in 1978, currently with 1,542 students; Milton Afonso Adventist Academy in Brasília, founded in 1970 with 1,191 students; Planaltina Adventist Academy in Planaltina RA, founded in 1982, with 1,247 students; Taguatinga Adventist Academy in Taguatinga RA, founded in 1964 with 1,060 students; and Guar Adventist School in Guar RA, founded in 1984, with 335 students - all of these schools are located in the Federal District. In addition, there is Formosa Adventist Academy in the city of Formosa, founded in 1967, currently with 664 students; Posse Adventist Academy in the city of Posse, founded in 1988, with 136 students; and, finally, Valparaiso Adventist Academy, in Valparaiso de Gois, founded in 2019, with 117 students - these last three units are located in the state of Gois.<sup>3</sup>

In the area of social assistance, two institutions serve the needy community of the Federal District and the surrounding area. In the administrative region of Samambaia Sul, in the Federal District, there is the Adventist Community Development Center (CADEC), which seeks to serve the community and be a factor of social integration by promoting socio-economic development through various workshops, such as dressmaking, gymnastics, classes and others.<sup>4</sup> In the city of Planaltina de Gois, in the state of Gois, is the Adventist Care Center for Children (NADAC), founded in 2003, which offers several projects for children, including nutritional reinforcement, tutoring, music instruction, arts education, sports, entrepreneurship, and others. Currently, about 140 children and teenagers from seven to 16 years old benefit from this center.<sup>5</sup>

In evangelism through media, there is strong coverage of Hope Channel Brazil, which since 2011 has been broadcast in Braslia via an analog channel. From 2016, the channel became digital, facilitating transmission to city residents. Currently, the signal reaches the entire Federal District and the surrounding area, spreading the gospel message throughout this vast region of APlAC territory.<sup>6</sup>

Since 2019, the Central Planalto Conference has 893 employees and 73 active pastors to serve the region. From this total of pastors, 61 are ordained and 12 are licensed; 57 are district pastors, six are pastors in Adventist Schools, and 10 are administrators, department leaders, and field secretaries.<sup>7</sup>

## Origin of Adventist Work in the Conference Territory

The history of Adventist work in APlaC territory began with the transfer of the federal capital - which until then was located in Rio de Janeiro - to Brasília. On January 31, 1956, Juscelino Kubitschek took over the presidency of the republic and in that same year, in fulfillment of his campaign promise, construction began in the new capital of Brazil, which was called Brasília. The construction of Brasília took only three years and 10 months. Between 1956 and 1960, people from several parts of the country went to the midwest to help build the new national capital. Finally, on April 21, 1960, already housing about 142 thousand inhabitants, Brasília was inaugurated and Rio de Janeiro ceased to be the administrative headquarters of the Brazilian government.<sup>8</sup>

In this context, in 1956, a canvasser<sup>9</sup> who lived in the south of the country, in a city called Paranavaí, in the state of Paraná, felt a strong desire to preach the gospel to his relatives who lived on a ranch in Abadia, Goiás. Rosalvo Arcanjo Novais, the canvasser, decided to pack his bags and, after making an agreement with the Goiano-Mineira Mission, moved to the city of Formosa, in the state of Goiás, where he could be closer to his relatives.<sup>10</sup>

However, as the city was small, in a few days Rosalvo was able to complete his work. At that time, the construction of Brasília was beginning. As Rosalvo still did not have a defined field to go to after he finished his work in Formosa, he decided to work in Nucleo Bandeirante, which is part of the administrative region of the Federal District.<sup>11</sup>

For three weeks, that canvasser thought that he was the only Adventist in Brasília, but was surprised one Sabbath morning when he was by a stream studying the Bible. While reading the Holy Scriptures, three well-dressed men approached and congratulated him on studying the Bible. These men were Walter León, Albino Dias, and Abner, three Adventists who already lived in the future capital of the country. After this encounter, the first reported group of Seventh-day Adventists in the territory of the Federal District was formed.<sup>12</sup>

Once, canvassing in a hospital, Rosalvo approached a bedridden and feverish old man named Quirino. Speaking about his work in that region, Rosalvo was asked the following question: "Are you a canvasser?" There was another Adventist who also lived in Brasília.<sup>13</sup> Later, in 1957, a group of 14 believers was formed and began to gather at Nucleo Bandeirante in an improvised shack. On April 5, 1958, the first baptism took place in Brasília, officiated by Pastor Paulo Seidl.<sup>14</sup>

Those Adventist pioneers lived in areas under judicial dispute in the region of Nucleo Bandeirante. From one moment to the next, they were transferred to Taguatinga - another administrative region of the Federal District. Those were difficult days for the brethren - whole families spent nights in the open. It was necessary to rebuild homes for families. In this regard, Brothers Tonico, Abner, and Ponciano took the lead, as they had more carpentry skills. Thus, they helped rebuild several shacks for families to live in.<sup>15</sup>

At this time, services were held in the (newly built) houses of the believers, with no fixed place for the church members to meet. However, even without a fixed location, Adventist work continued to advance in that region to the point that the first baptism in the region of Taguatinga took place not long after - on February 14, 1959. At

this baptismal ceremony, Francisco Merencio and Maria Brito, his wife, publicly admitted their faith. Pastor Paulo Seidl officiated at the beautiful ceremony. In that same year, the first Adventist church camp was held in the administrative region of Gama.<sup>16</sup>

The following are among the main pioneers of the Adventist message in Brasilia: Joaquim Novais, Rafael Novais, Maria Conceição Novais, Benice Novais, Jose Carlos Amorim, Tônico, Otacilio, Antenor Macena, Lázaro Leite, Valdemar Melo, Manoel Rocha, Felinto, Florípes Dias Brito, Alaor de Araújo, Lázaro de Araújo, Euclides Silva, Celia Borges, Miltinho and José Nicodemos. These and many other pioneers came to Brasilia from various regions in the country and began to evangelize this vast field.<sup>17</sup>

In 1960, the first pastoral family arrived in Brasilia - Pastor José Dias Campos and his wife Nildes, who came from the city of Ituiutaba, in the state of Minas Gerais. They faced several challenges in the newly created Brazilian capital. One of these challenges was the great difficulty in obtaining clean water to meet the necessities of the family.<sup>18</sup>

With regard to ministerial challenges, finding land to build the first Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Federal District was difficult. The first option was a small area, situated between two plots. Pastor Campos, unconvinced that this area was a good option, prayed to God for a bigger piece of land in front of a large avenue. Thinking that they had found a plot that fit the profile they wanted, another organization came ahead of them and acquired the land, forcing the church to look elsewhere.<sup>19</sup>

In answer to the prayer, a place twice as large as the previous one facing a busy avenue was found. Soon a shack was built, which for some time functioned as a house of worship. On March 25, 1962, the cornerstone of the Central Church of Taguatinga, the first Adventist Church in and around Brasilia, was laid, with a beautiful ceremony.<sup>20</sup>

While Sister Nildes Campos collected materials for the construction, Pastor José Dias led the pace of the work. The first Adventist church, the brethren eagerly awaited its inauguration. When the time came, city officials and local people were invited to attend (scheduled for October 12, 1963). That day, at 9 o'clock, the Taguatinga regional administrator cut the ribbon, and Pastor Roberto Azevedo, turning the key, opened the doors of the church. At this celebration, 75 people were baptized.<sup>21</sup>

The administrative organization of this church took place on November 14, 1964, when the elders, the Sabbath School director, and the first youth director were elected. In that same year, the Adventist school began to function under the leadership of teacher Carmen Paiva, and a year later, teacher Célia Paiva took office. Since then, the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been expanded in the Federal District, giving rise to other congregations, such as Brasilia Central, Taguatinga Norte, Taguatinga Sul, Asa Norte, Ceilândia Sul, and Areal, among others. The message has been preached, and every day the number of those who accept the gospel preached by the remnant church grows.<sup>22</sup>

Nearly 10 years later, in September 1973, there were 12 established congregations in Brasília (including churches and groups), and at least three pastoral districts - which shows the great progress of Adventist work in this territory. In addition, the number of inhabitants in this region increasingly grew, reaching 800,000 inhabitants. The church leadership consequently decided to begin construction the following year on the new headquarters of the South American Division (DSA) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Brasília.<sup>23</sup> The cornerstone of the new DSA headquarters was laid on January 15, 1974.<sup>24</sup> The inauguration ceremony took place on June 22, 1976, marking the 60th anniversary of the DSA organization (although the building had been used before that date).<sup>25</sup>

Adventist work continued to grow in this region and several new churches were organized. One of those new churches emerged from inside a hospital - the Adventist Hospital of Brasília, and was organized with several members, including the brothers linked to the construction of the hospital and the various residents of the Brasília Lake Region. On September 4, 1982, Pastor Anísio Chagas of the Central Adventist Church of Brasília baptized 10 people as a result of divine blessings and the Church's work in the hospital.<sup>26</sup>

In the mid-1990s, the field's administrative headquarters was located in Goiânia. However, the increased expansion of the Church in and around Brasília created a need for local support for the growing work. In this context, the Central Planalto Conference was created to provide closer assistance to this strategic region where the headquarters of the South American Division and the Central West Brazil Union are also located.

## Organizational History of the Conference

In December 1994, APlAC was created, resulting from the decisions of the former Central Brazil Conference (ABC) which, in its III Triennial Assembly, held on the 14th to 17th of the same month, reorganized its missionary territory. From then on, the Central Planalto Conference was responsible for the work in the Federal District and the state of Tocantins, besides the municipalities of the Chapada dos Veadeiros micro regions: Alto Paraíso de Goiás, Campos Belos, Cavalcante, South Hills, Monte Alegre de Goiás, Nova Roma, São João D'Aliança, and Teresina de Goiás.<sup>27</sup>

APlAC was also responsible for the Vale do Paranã microregions: Alvorada do Norte, Damanópolis, Flores de Goiás, Divinópolis de Goiás, Guarani de Goiás, Iaciara, Mambai, Posse, São Domingos, Simolândia, and Sítio D'Abadia. In addition, the Mato Grosso regions were also under its assistance: the municipalities of São Félix do Araguaia, Luciara, and Santa Terezinha. Finally, its territory also included the regions around Brasília: Água Fria de Goiás, Cabeceiras, Formosa, Luziânia, Cidade Ocidental, Mimoso de Goiás, Padre Bernardo, Planaltina, and Santo Antônio do Descoberto.<sup>28</sup>

Throughout this vast territory, Central Planalto Conference was responsible for assisting approximately 16,033 members and 45 organized churches. The region had a total population of 2,663,829 inhabitants. At the time of APlAC's foundation, there was about one Adventist per 166 inhabitants in its territory.<sup>29</sup> The first president of the

Central Planalto Conference was Pastor Manoel Xavier de Lima, who continued to hold office during the period from December 18, 1994 to May 3, 1999. The first to hold the positions of secretary and treasurer was Pastor Josias de S. Fragoso, who remained in the two positions between 1994 and 1997.<sup>30</sup>

Once established, APlAC had its office in an adapted home, provided by the Central Brasilia Seventh-day Adventist Church, located next to the headquarters of the South American Division (DSA) at Avenida L3, SGAS 611, Conjunto D, Part C, South Wing, Brasilia, Federal District. The inauguration of this provisional headquarters of the conference took place on May 2, 1995 and the event was attended by field workers, leaders of the Central Brazil Union (UCB), leaders and members of the South American Division's Administrative Board, as well as members of churches from various parts of the region.<sup>31</sup>

Later, on May 8, 1997, the cornerstone was laid for the construction of the official headquarters of the Central Planalto Conference in Brasilia. The ceremony was attended by Dr. Alípio Rosa from the South American Division, Pastor Tércio Sarli from the Central Brazil Union, and Pastor Valdir Soares, regional president of the Bible Society of Brazil (SBB), as well as administrators, workers, and believers in the field.<sup>32</sup>

The building was about 3,000 m.<sup>2</sup> It currently has three floors with the basement (garage), with enough buildings to house the church offices. The construction cost was estimated at approximately R\$ 800,000.00 (approximately US\$200,000.00). Completion was expected by the end of 1999, depending on financial resources. The engineer, Colonel Oswaldo Castanho, and the administrator, Pastor Josias de Souza Fragoso, were responsible for the construction work of the conference's headquarters. A few years later, in 2001, APlAC's staff performed the "Thanksgiving Service," in gratitude for the new facilities of their administrative office in the building under construction.<sup>33</sup>

In 2008, another church administrative unit began to function, which took over the leadership of the churches in the northernmost region that had so far been part of the territory of the Central Planalto Conference. This new administrative unit was named Tocantins Mission (MTo). With the creation of this new mission, the geography covered by APlAC was changed and the Planalto Central Conference has continued to multiply efforts ever since, with greater attention to the region of Brasilia and its surroundings.<sup>34</sup>

Before this division was made in the administrative field of APlAC, there were about 30,864 members linked to the conference, distributed in 137 organized churches.<sup>35</sup> However, after the creation of the Tocantins Mission, the Central Planalto Conference began to lead about 20,835 members and 101 organized churches, being responsible for directing the advancement of Adventist work in the Federal District.<sup>36</sup>

This reorganization boosted growth, as evidenced from the data regarding the number of members and churches in the territory that was published the following year. According to these data, approximately one year after the division in the territory, there were about 22,081 baptized members linked to APlAC, and at least 108 organized churches. This shows the good progress made during this one-year period - more than 1,000 new members were added to the Church in this region and at least seven new churches were organized.<sup>37</sup>

Such progress highlights the missionary focus maintained by this institution. APlac aims to fulfill the mission given by Jesus to His disciples - which is evident through the numerous projects that are carried out by the institution in partnership with the churches in the field. As an incentive to “fellowship with God,” for example, in 2014 the *Seminários de Enriquecimento Espiritual* [Spiritual Enrichment Seminars] project began, covering a range of other related projects that help the spiritual development of each church member (whether they are adults, youth, or children).<sup>38</sup>

APlac has also developed the Project Mel [Honey Project], which encourages countless women to be missionaries,<sup>39</sup> in addition to health fairs. During the realization of this project, the importance of the eight natural remedies as taught by Ellen G. White is emphasized, and Bible studies are offered to participants.<sup>40</sup>

Another missionary action promoted by the Central Planalto Conference is the donation of blood. This project brings hundreds of people together over the weekend for blood donations in hospitals and has helped countless people in need. In addition, APlac has also developed *Evangelismo da Colheita* [Harvest Evangelism]. Every year this model of evangelism drives people to give their lives to Christ. In 2018 alone, 519 baptisms were recorded as a result of God's blessings poured out during this type of evangelism.<sup>41</sup>

The Central Planalto Conference team has been committed to eliciting the participation of children, teenagers, and youth in the activities proposed by the Church. The activities are divided by age group, and among them, APlac Aventuri (Adventurers Camp) stands out,<sup>42</sup> which in 2017 gathered around 1,500 adventurers. Another highlight is the Pathfinder clubs.<sup>43</sup> There are 153 active clubs and about 4,821 participants throughout APlac. These Pathfinders were able to attend a large camporee<sup>44</sup> organized by UCOB in 2017, when more than 15,000 Pathfinders from the region were gathered. In addition, AdoleCamp is another prominent activity performed at APlac. This project involves holding a camp that aims to provide a special time for teens, allowing them to spend a weekend at a spiritual retreat, closer to God.<sup>45</sup>

APlac leaders and church members have been involved with Hope Impact, a project by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South America that encourages reading and free annual distribution of books. In 2018 alone, around 550,000 evangelistic books were distributed in and around the Federal District. Most of these books were delivered on May 26th. On that day, employees from APlac's administrative headquarters, along with employees from Planaltina Adventist Education, were able to attend the event and took the opportunity to make a special invitation for the reopening of the Adventist college - a few days later.<sup>46</sup>

Among the departments and ministries in operation at the Central Planalto Conference, one stands out for being the only one of its kind in Brazil, to function institutionally in a conference or mission - prison ministry, created on December 11, 2018 and led by Pastor Jeconias Neto. This department performs pioneer work with a very specific group, prisoners.<sup>47</sup> When asked about the need for a prison ministry, in an interview, Pastor Jechonias explained that this mission is based on the biblical passage of Hebrews 13: 3.<sup>48</sup> This ministry performs specific activities, not only with inmates, but also with their families. The activities carried out with the

incarcerated are as follows: Bible school, public evangelism, weeks of spiritual emphasis, television discipleship by the Hope Channel Brazil,<sup>49</sup> and delivery of mission books through the Hope Impact project. The activities differ a little when including their families, but maintain the same goal, which is to bring them closer to God. The activities performed are family visits, Bible studies, small groups, lectures in local churches, and legal information assistance.<sup>50</sup>

The prison ministry has proven relevant not only to prisoners, but also to the volunteers who participate. Through the course of Adventist prison chaplaincy, many volunteers became later chaplains and found meaningful ways to serve people in need. In 2019, there were more than 170 chaplains preaching the gospel to incarcerated people and their families through this ministry.<sup>51</sup>

During the operation of this department, it was possible to install Hope Channel Brazil in the federal prison of Brasilia, the Papuda Penitentiary Complex. Approximately 15,000 prisoners currently have access to the Seventh-day Adventist Church channel, giving many people access to the biblical teachings. The initiative is unprecedented in Brazil and has attracted the attention of various government agencies. The inauguration of this service was on December 10, 2015.<sup>52</sup>

The prison ministry has saved many people through its work. In an interview, Pastor Jeconias emphasized the story of Valderson - a young man who was imprisoned for three years in the Papuda Penitentiary Complex. While serving his sentence, this man began to receive Bible studies from someone in the ministry. Meanwhile, his wife, Regilene, was also ministered to and supported by church members.<sup>53</sup>

After receiving Bible studies, Valderson decided to be baptized as soon as he left prison. When he finished serving his sentence, he was baptized and today is a deacon of the Genesis Seventh-day Adventist Church in a region called Sol Nascente [Sun Rise]. His wife also surrendered to Jesus and became a chaplain of the prison ministry. This and many other stories testify to the positive results of this ministry, which mobilizes people to preach the gospel to prisoners and their families.<sup>54</sup>

In addition to these missionary fronts, attention is given to the interpersonal relationships of church members in the conference territory. To this end, the team has sought to create small groups (which have the potential to form new leaders). Records show that between 2018 and 2019, the index of new small groups created experienced substantial growth, accounting for at least 788 existing groups. The history of this conference shows that as the start of Adventism in Brasilia began through groups gathered in the homes of some members, in which Adventism prospered, this method of the past and other successful strategies may still be useful in advancing the work.

At the beginning of 2019 the project Together was created, which became APlac's main motto this year. Their goal is to encourage more young people, adults, and children to attend church training and activities to be missionaries engaged in the completion of the mission. The project aims to give opportunity for the most experienced to teach the younger members.<sup>55</sup> In addition to the Together project, the *Semeadores da*



*Esperança* [Hope Sowers] project was also carried out, which encourages intercessory prayer, that is, praying for relatives or close friends. This project lasts at least 21 mornings and seeks to help members of Adventist churches to be true missionaries.<sup>56</sup>

Despite the many proposals to involve members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the mission of preaching the gospel, challenges remain in disseminating the message to people who need it. Many regions have been reached by means of the work developed by APlAC members and employees. However, it is still necessary to take the gospel to the most elite neighborhoods of Brasilia -Park Way, Lago Norte, Lago Sul, and Noroeste (neighborhoods where the Church is not yet present). Building churches in these regions poses certain difficulties, such as finding land at a reasonable price and obtaining building permits.<sup>57</sup>

Regarding the future, a strategy is being studied with DSA to start a church in the Park Way region. According to the leadership, this project is being developed because of the perception that this area is expanding - which reveals the need for the institution to act as soon as possible to enable an institutionalized meeting point in order to receive those who come in contact with the Adventist message.<sup>58</sup> Thus APlAC continues to fulfill its evangelical mission.

## Chronology of Administrative Officers<sup>59</sup>

Presidents: Manoel Xavier de Lima (1994-1999); Pavel Oliveira Moura (1999-2002); Ronaldo de Oliveira (2002-2004); Jairo Emerick Torres (2004-2011); Charles Antonio Britis (2011-2018); Max D. Schuabb Couto (2018-current).

Secretaries: Josias de S. Fragoso (1994-1997); Valmir Carneiro Gama (1998-2003); Carlos Enoc Pollheim (2004-2007); Gilson Oseias Montin (2008-2012); Uesley Peyerl (2013); Erionildes Oliveira Chagas (2014); Fernando Campanha Rios (2015); Max D. Schuabb Couto (2016-2018); Mark Wallacy da C. Ribeiro (2018-current).

Treasurers: Josias de S. Fragoso (1994-1997); Miguel de Oliveira Leão (1998-2000); Ademir de Oliveira (2001-2003); Jabson Magalhães Silva (2004-2008); Uilson Leandro Garcia (2009-2015); Anderson Erthal (2016-current).<sup>60</sup>

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