



Central São Paulo Conference headquarters.

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Central Sao Paulo Conference

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The Central São Paulo Conference is an administrative unit of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, part of the Central Brazil Union Conference. Its headquarters is located on Júlio Ribeiro St., nº 188, Bonfim neighborhood, Zip Code 13070-712, in the city of Campinas, state of São Paulo, Brazil.¹

The Central São Paulo Conference comprises the center of the state of São Paulo in the region of Campinas and the cities nearby. The total population in its territory is about 5,805,299 inhabitants. It is home to at least 35,713 baptized members, distributed in about 164 churches. The average is about one Adventist per 162 inhabitants²

6,510 students attend nine conference schools. The schools are Americana Adventist Academy, in the city of Americana, with 1,241 students; Campinas Adventist Academy, with 896 students; Paulínia Adventist Academy, with 1,212 students; Artur Nogueira Adventist Academy, with 571 students; Castelo Adventist School, with 194 students; Jundiaí Adventist School, with 419 students; Limeira Adventist School, with 579 students; Mogi-Guaçu Adventist School, with 955 students; and Rio Claro Adventist School, with 443 students.³

The Engenheiro Coelho campus of Brazil Adventist University (UNASP-EC) is also in the Central São Paulo Conference territory. The institution, administrated by the Central Brazil Union Conference, is located at Municipal Pastor Walter Boger Rd., km 35, in the municipality of Engenheiro Coelho. The UNASP-EC is one of the local branches of the Latin-American Adventist Theology Seminary (SALT).⁴

The Central São Paulo Conference also has a training center, the Analândia Adventist Educational Camp, located at Washington Luís HWY, km 221, in the municipality of Analândia. It features accommodations, a cafeteria, a camping area, a swimming pool, a soccer field, a stage for events, a green area, and a wide trail with native vegetation. The site has room for 198 people to lodge in the accommodations and space for 1,200 tents. The camping site periodically hosts spiritual retreats, camporees,⁵ and Adventurers Family Camp,⁶ among other events.

In addition to these organizations, there are three care institutions in the territory: the Núcleo Social Prof.^a Cássia Rodrigues Lasca [Prof. Cássia Rodrigues Lasca Social Center]⁷, in the city of Campinas, which serves 96 families and 120 children from ages 6 to 14, the Núcleo Crianças e Adolescentes de Engenheiro Coelho [Engenheiro Coelho Children and Teenagers Center], which serves children ages 6 to 14 in a situation of extreme social vulnerability, victims of maltreatment, poor, and/or exposed to violence, and the Plano de Assistência a Infância [Child Care Plan], in Rio Claro, which aims to serve 175 children ages 6 to 15.⁸ All these institutions provide access to services of interaction and bonds strengthening, providing human development and social inclusion.

Hope Channel Brazil Radio broadcasts out of Campinas, located on 188 Júlio Ribeiro St., Bonfim neighborhood. The radio broadcasts its shows, whose content is purely for evangelistic purposes, on the 830 AM frequency.⁹ The station has the capacity to reach 1,080,113 inhabitants in the city of Campinas,¹⁰ plus 51,242 in the city of Nova Odessa.¹¹

The conference has a total of 801 staff members: 761 employees, 24 accredited workers, 16 licensed workers, and 77 pastors, 60 of whom have a ministerial credential, and 17 of whom have a ministerial license.

The Origin of Seventh-day Adventist Work in the Conference Territory

In 1891, Adventist canvassers Elwin Winthorp Snyder, Clair A. Nowlen, and Albert B. Stauffer¹² arrived in Argentina, in the first attempt to spread Adventist literature in South America. Two years later, Stauffer came to

Brazil, becoming the first ever Adventist canvasser to work in that country. Stauffer organized groups of believers in the cities of Indaiatuba, Piracicaba, and Rio Claro.¹³

In the following year, Albert B. Stauffer sold the book "The Great Controversy" in German to a woman named Margarida Krähenbuhl. The literature caught the attention of Krähenbuhl's grandson-in-law, Guilherme Stein, Jr. Stein came to be the first person baptized in Brazil and translated the first Adventist books into Portuguese. Pastor Frank Henry Westphal baptized Stein in April 1895 on the banks of the Piracicaba River. In Rio Claro Westphal baptized Guilherme and Paulina Meyer.¹⁴ In 1995 Westphal organized the first Sabbath School in Brazil, with about 30 students, in the city of Indaiatuba, in the countryside of São Paulo state.¹⁵

In 1903 Frederick W. Spies, president of the Brazilian Conference (today's Rio de Janeiro Conference), baptized seven people on one of his missionary trips to Itararé, in the countryside of São Paulo state. Pastor Emilio Hoelzle stayed in this city for a while, in order to strengthen new members.¹⁶ Pastor John Lipke spent "ten days visiting, preaching and canvassing" in this region, and realized "the great need for a permanent worker, since there [wasn't] a single missionary in the entire state."

In 1904 a meeting took place in the province of Entre Rios, in Argentina, to determine how the Adventist Church could best operate in South America. The Brazilian Conference was reorganized into four new administrative branches: the Rio Grande Conference, the Santa Catarina and Parana Conference, the São Paulo Mission, and the North Brazil Mission. Emilio Hoelzle was appointed president of the São Paulo Mission, and the city of Rio Claro was chosen for its headquarters. At the time, the São Paulo Mission had only 22 members.¹⁷

The mission needed more people to help. On top of his administrative duties, Hoelzle still needed to meet the editorial demands for the *Trimonthly Review*.¹⁸ Despite the challenges, in that year Hoelzle was able to organize the first Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rio Claro, the first of the São Paulo Mission.¹⁹

By 1909 there were Adventist churches organized in the cities of São Bernardo, Itapetininga, Itararé, and Rio Claro. Sabbath School classes were organized in cities such as Santos, Itararé, Capim Grande, and Serro do Serrado. At the time, the total number of members enrolled in the Sabbath School assisted by the São Paulo Mission was up to 77, of which at least 48 were adults.²⁰

Canvasser Mathias P. de Alencar arrived in Campinas in February 1914 and stayed until January 1915. Other canvassers who worked in Campinas after Mathias were Hanna Lindquist, Isalina Correia, L. Meira, and Arthur Américo, who arrived in the city in 1919. After that, the first group of Adventists in that city was formed, 7 adults and 2 children.²¹

Thanks to the canvassers, when evangelists held a series of meetings in Campinas, many people in the city were ready to hear the Adventist message.²² In 1922 the São Paulo Mission had 750 baptized members and became the São Paulo Conference.²³

The first series of public meetings in Campinas took place in 1930, led by Pastors A. E. Hagen and Jerônimo G. Garcia. About 100 people were baptized after five months of work.²⁴ Church meetings started to be provisionally held in a room rented by Hagen at the Templo da Justiça [Temple of Justice] in Campinas. At the time, the church had about 110 baptized members. Two years later, many students were enrolled in the church's Sabbath School, and a 600-square meter lot close to the room was bought for the construction of a new church.²⁵

In 1931, brothers Mauro and Ajax Silveira moved from the capital of São Paulo to the city of Limeira, in the countryside of São Paulo state. After settling in, the brothers began to talk about the gospel to some of their neighbors and employees. The first families to accept the message were the Kuhls and the Iansens.²⁶ The first Sabbath School meeting in the city, at a little farm by a road, took place in January 1932. About 25 people participated, and that year the first baptismal ceremony in the region took place, with four people baptized by Pastor Ricardo Wilfart.²⁷

By 1935 it was necessary to build a church to hold the meetings of the Limeira Adventist group. João Kuhl donated a lot located on Piracicaba Av., and Luiz Iansen donated the bricks for the construction. Two rooms were built, a sanctuary and a school. Pastor Siegfried Hoffmann preached the first sermon in the new building.²⁸

In 1936 Rodolpho Belz was elected the first Brazilian president of the São Paulo Conference. Construction of a church building in Campinas began in November 1937, with an inauguration in September 1938.²⁹ In 1939 the conference's territory was organized into pastoral districts, allowing closer contact with the churches. This gave more "efficiency to the work, since all groups can have the visit of a worker more often."³⁰

The 1940s were marked by new health and education institutions, new means of evangelization such as the radio, and the encouragement of a good relationship between the church and the Brazilian press. However, the challenges continued and the need for new pastors grew to keep up with the growth of the church in the state of São Paulo. In 1948 there were about 5,647 members distributed among 189 churches and 15 pastoral districts. That year the church sent 153 of the 189 undergraduate theology students from Brazil College to meet the needs for assistance in the field.³¹

In the 1960s Indaiatuba finally saw significant growth.³² On August 20, 1961, Abel Corrêa de Campos' family and canvasser José Bispo arrived in the city, and began to hold Sabbath School meetings by themselves. This changed when Rafael Ambrize, a member of Carlos Barretos' family, arrived in Indaiatuba, coming from the Central Adventist Church of Campinas. The newcomers began to help during the meetings, held alternately in the homes of the Campos and Barretos families.³³

In 1968 the meetings in Indaiatuba moved to a rented room on 7 de Setembro St. After about a year the room was no longer available, leaving the church members without a definite meeting place once more. Finally, in 1972, Sabbath School meetings started again, this time in a house provided by one of the church members. In 1976 the group was organized as a group belonging to the district of Jundiaí.³⁴

The 1970s saw major growth. By 1977, membership exceeded 50,000, and there were 438 congregations, making the Central São Paulo Conference the largest in the world.³⁵ Conference leaders drew up plans to reach more remote cities which still had no Adventist representation,³⁶ and to reorganize to better serve the congregations.³⁷

Organizational History

On September 18 and 19, 1977, an assembly took place at the D. Pedro II Adventist Elementary School, in the city of São Carlos. The São Paulo Conference requested a reorganization.³⁸ The conference was split into the East Sao Paulo Conference (former São Paulo Conference and present Sao Paulo Conference) and the West Sao Paulo Conference (a new field).³⁹

The East Sao Paulo Conference became responsible for managing work in the capital and on the coast of the state of São Paulo.⁴⁰ The administration was composed of Floriano Xavier dos Santos, president; Osmundo Graciliano dos Santos, Jr., secretary; and Horácio Tardas, treasurer.⁴¹ The West Sao Paulo Conference took responsibility for the entire countryside of the state of São Paulo, except for the coastline.⁴² Its new leadership was Ítalo Manzolli, president; and Sérgio Octaviano, secretary and treasurer.⁴³ The West Sao Paulo Conference offices were initially located on 260 Espanha St., in the Bonfim neighborhood, in the city of Campinas.⁴⁴ As they started operations, on January 1, 1978, the conference managed about 300 Bible workers and assisted over 13,000 members, distributed among 128 congregations and 28 districts.⁴⁵

The West Sao Paulo Conference developed a program aimed to maximize its impact. The results came in 1978, when the number of baptisms reached almost 1,500 across the field.⁴⁶ It was a great victory, nearly double 1977's 830 baptisms.⁴⁷ The West Sao Paulo Conference staff was also committed to inaugurating new schools and adding grades in existing ones. In 1979 there were already 16 schools offering 1st to 4th grade, and nine schools with 5th to 8th grade, and eight schools under construction. At least 141 students were baptized due to the influence of these schools.⁴⁸ In that two-year period the conference built 13 new churches, reformed eight churches, and bought 21 lots to build churches and three lots to build new schools.⁴⁹

During the next three-year term, several evangelistic campaigns occurred, including ones in Atibaia and Penápolis, in the Anchieta neighborhood, and "Operação Campinas" [Operation Campinas], a project led by Pastor Alcides Campolongo, from the South Brazil Union Conference, together with Pastor Reinaldo Kafler, evangelist pastor from the West Sao Paulo Conference. Their efforts led to over 400 baptisms and the organization of two new churches, the Costa e Silva Church and Boa Vista Church.⁵⁰ The Anchieta meetings were led by Reinaldo Kafler and his team of Bible workers, in a newly built Community Housing Center. Ninety consecutive nights long, it took place in a portable canvas auditorium with room for 600 people.⁵¹

Between 1980 and 1982, 11 new churches were organized, including at least three in Campinas. Thirty-six new groups emerged, including five which developed so quickly that they were soon organized into churches. At the

time, there were five schools and 48 churches under construction. Fifty new lots were bought, five for the construction of schools, one for a pastor's house, and the other 44 for the construction of new churches. During this three-year term, 4,753 people were baptized in the West Sao Paulo Conference region, with the influence of the Adventist schools playing an important role in at least 275 of these baptisms.⁵²

In 1983, the economic crisis that hit Brazil affected the West Sao Paulo Conference's finances. The conference Bible workers set themselves to do their best and inspire members to be faithful in their tithes and offerings. Through this and other initiatives, the conference reached the end of the three-year term with its finances balanced. In December 1983, the conference's balance was 15.7 percent below the amount advised. Yet, after the workers' initiative, by October 1985 the balance was already 61.12 percent higher than the amount advised.⁵³

Between 1983 and 1985, pastors conducted 58 series of evangelistic meetings, and local lay members carried out many as well. That three-year term about 4,700 people were baptized. Fifty-seven new churches were built and 18 new churches were inaugurated.⁵⁴

In 1987 church leaders saw a need for a new reorganization in the West Sao Paulo Conference. On December 20, 1988, the decision was made to reorganize, effective January 1, 1989. The conference, based in Campinas, was renamed Central São Paulo Conference, and a newly split off conference inherited the name West Sao Paulo Conference. The headquarters of the new field was set up on 19 Prof. Jamil Khauan St., in Vila Imperial neighborhood, in the city of São José do Rio Preto, in the state of São Paulo's countryside.⁵⁵

The Central São Paulo Conference now managed the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the region of Campinas and in the nearby cities, except the capital state, the coast, the Paraíba Valley and the Ribeira Valley. At the time, the region was home to about 5,734,300 inhabitants and the conference had 15,843 members, distributed among 75 churches, for a ratio of one Adventist per 361 inhabitants in the region.⁵⁶ The Adventist work kept growing in the entire state of São Paulo, and in 1992, the five church administrative units in the state of São Paulo (São Paulo Conference, South São Paulo Conference, East São Paulo Conference, Central São Paulo Conference, and West São Paulo Conference) accounted for about 108,956 registered members.⁵⁷

On September 9, 1999, Brazil Adventist University merged with IAE São Paulo, forming a multicampus institution called Brazil Adventist University.⁵⁸ This institution has contributed significantly to the advancement of the missionary work in the region.

By the end of 2001 the Central São Paulo Conference had about 32,651 baptized members. From 2002 to 2005, at least 10,518 people were baptized, bringing total membership to 40,090. The addition of 61 new churches and 67 new groups brought with the conference to a total of 382 congregations. Twelve municipalities with no Adventist presence were reached by the conference's Global Mission department.⁵⁹

For seven years the leaders of the Central São Paulo Conference raised funds to construct a new headquarters without undermining the assistance provided to congregations. In 2004 the conference purchased a 2,400

square meter lot, and on June 12, 2005, the new headquarters was inaugurated. The building is located on Júlio Ribeiro St., no 188, Bonfim neighborhood, in the city of Campinas.⁶⁰

This and other resources continued to contribute to the missionary advancement of the Adventist work in the region. A major highlight in 2008 was the project “Reintegration,” aimed at former Adventists. Led by speaker Pastor Alejandro Bullón, it took place in three cities, Engenheiro Coelho, Sumaré and Sorocaba. The project saw 462 people rebaptized.⁶¹

The Central São Paulo Conference improved its communication system by hiring a journalist, developing an institutional website, launching a quarterly newspaper called “Comunhão e Ação” [Communion and Action], investing in Hope Channel Brazil Radio AM 830, and in broadcasting the program “Voice of Prophecy”⁶² on more than 40 radio stations.⁶³ Churches installed antennas to broadcast the Hope Channel Brazil signal to congregations of the territory. By the end of the decade, 262 out of 392 churches had the service installed.⁶⁴ Another evangelistic project that made use of communication was a TV show called “Connection with Jesus,” which started broadcasting April 6, 2010. Hosted by Pastor Ivan Estina, then pastoring in Cosmópolis, the TV show was aired on the Campinas metropolitan region’s first Web TV, Jaguari TV. The episodes were made available on the Web TV website.⁶⁵

The Central São Paulo Conference has carried out many other missionary and humanitarian initiatives, including the evangelism held at the “Centro de Detenção Provisória da cidade de Americana” [Americana Provisional Detention Center], on May 23, 2012. A solidarity campaign that May 27 in Jundiaí took place during a health fair, and over 250 people benefited from the services offered. The work carried out during the campaign included vocational guidance, professional courses, haircuts, aesthetics, personal hygiene services, and lectures on health and quality of life. The project’s goal “was to bring services to the community and offer them what the church has the best, which is hope and contact with Christ.”⁶⁶

Another important missionary project that carried out in the Central São Paulo Conference is Atos 29 [Acts 29]. Created in 2013, the projects’ goal is to promote the continuation of the story told in the biblical book of Acts. The more than 400 students of Brazil Adventist University (Engenheiro Coelho campus) who take part in Atos 29 project, dedicate themselves to meet the needs of the homeless, the elderly, drug addicts in rehabilitation clinics, and children in shelters. The volunteers also assist the Núcleo Infantil de Engenheiro Coelho [Engenheiro Coelho Children’s Center], supporting families or students in need.⁶⁷

Another prominent evangelistic project was carried out on May 10, 2014, involving people of all ages. A group of Adventurers⁶⁸ and Pathfinders,⁶⁹ coordinated by the Women’s Ministry department,⁷⁰ took to the streets to give away flowers to women who passed through one of the Campinas avenues. In addition to flowers, the young missionaries also gave away books and performed music.⁷¹

In 2015, a new model of evangelism was introduced in the conference, called Amigos de Oração [Prayer Friends]. Initially, the project lasted approximately six months. The project steps church members follow are:

choose two friends to pray for; text them letting them know about the prayer; ask them for specific prayer requests; call on the entire church to pray for the requests; invite these friends to a meal; invite them to a special program at the church. After a few months, the project's leading pastor leads a series of ten special programs dedicated to those who take part in Bible studies in the church.⁷²

By the end of 2015, the general population of the Central São Paulo Conference was 6,786,259, with 31,608 members, for a ratio of one Adventist per 214 inhabitants.⁷³ In 2016, in order to reach more people with the gospel message, an application for mobile devices was developed for the continuous training of leaders.⁷⁴ In June 2017, the Prayer Friends project ended, having taken place in at least in 48 districts of Central São Paulo Conference and seen the baptisms of approximately 2,500 people.⁷⁵

Central São Paulo Conference members have been involved with projects developed by the South American Division, such as: "10 days of prayer and 10 hours of fasting,"⁷⁶ "Breaking the Silence,"⁷⁷ and Hope Impact.⁷⁸ In 2019, participants in Hope Impact distributed about three million books throughout the state of São Paulo. In the city of Limeira alone, about 50,000 books were given away by students, educators and directors of Brazil Adventist University's Engenheiro campus.⁷⁹

Throughout its history, the Central São Paulo Conference has aimed to "make disciples through Christ's method to expand the Kingdom of God." To continue fulfilling its role, the conference has plans focused on three fronts: (1) on the community, aiming at making the local church more relevant where it is based, through socio-educational projects; (2) on people, including a personal development project, with a school for training leaders and another school for ministries, both via distance learning; and (3) expanding the Kingdom of God, which in the next four years involves increasing the number of congregations to 410, the total of students to 9,000, and expanding to 62 pastoral districts.⁸⁰ Nonetheless, in order to fulfill these goals, the leadership field faces some challenges, including financial challenges and a need for greater involvement by church members.⁸¹

Chronology of Administrative Executives⁸²

Presidents: Ítalo Manzolli (1978-1982); Tércio Sarli (1982-1993); Wilson Sarli (1993-1995); Otávio Alves da Costa (1996-2001); Oliveiros Pinto Ferreira (2001-2014); Erlo Braun (2015-present).

Secretaries: Sérgio Octaviano (1978-1982); Edelzir Dutra Amorim (1982-1989); Axel Rennevert Waegele (1989-1991); Paulo Sérgio Stina (1991-2001); Aurelino Aurélio Ferreira (2001-2008); Emmanuel Oliveira Guimarães (2009-2012); Dimas Pereira Artiga (2013-2014); Steverson Lemes da Silva (2015-present).

Treasurers: Sérgio Octaviano (1978-1982); Edmar Ribeiro Martins (1983-1997); Celestino José de Sousa (1997-2008); Hugo Ernesto Quiroga (2009-2017); Jailton Borges Magalhães (2018-present).⁸³

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NOTES

1. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Central Sao Paulo Conference." Accessed June 25, 2019, <http://bit.ly/2XyUGcl>.
2. Ibid.
3. Seventh-day Adventist Church. <https://apac.Adventistas.org/>.
4. *Latin-American Adventist Theology Seminary*, "Sedes" [headquarters]. Accessed January 23, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2NU19jr>.
5. "Camporee is a large camp that gathers teenagers, youth and children who participate in the clubs maintained by the Seventh-day Adventist Church." Seventh-day Adventist Church Official Website, "Campori de Desbravadores da DSA" [Pathfinders Camporee of South America Division (DSA)]. Accessed February 4, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2uwY377>.
6. Adventurers Family Camp is a camp held with the boys and girls of the Adventurers Club together with their parents. At this camp, children hear biblical stories, play, and can enjoy a special time with friends and family. Pâmela Meireles, "Aventuri incentiva crianças a se tornarem missionárias" [Aventuri encourages children to become missionaries], Adventist News Network, July 5, 2017. Accessed July 4, 2019, <http://bit.ly/2YAllww>.

7. "Project that, when started in 1992, took place in Chácara São Domingos Adventist Church premises (currently known as Jardim Bom Sucesso) and served 20 local children. Subsequently, on March 20, 1997, the project was given its own space and started operating in a new building built on the same street as the church." Núcleo Prof^a. Cássia Rodrigues [Prof. Cássia Rodrigues Lasca Center], Facebook post, June 14, 2019. Accessed June 25, 2019, <http://bit.ly/2ZFGJXY>;
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9. *Novo Tempo*, "A rádio" [Hope Channel Brazil, "The radio"], accessed June 25, 2019, <http://bit.ly/2XwYcEw>; "Central Sao Paulo Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2018, 230.
10. 2019 Brazil census, Campinas, São Paulo, estimated population, IBGE. Accessed January 23, 2020, <https://bit.ly/37y7txG>.
11. 2019 Brazil census, Nova Odessa, São Paulo, estimated population, IBGE. Accessed January 23, 2020, <https://bit.ly/37IRGLV>.
12. A canvasser, or literature evangelist, "sells to the public publications edited and approved by the Church, to impart to his fellow-men the eternal Gospel that brings salvation and physical and spiritual well-being." Seventh-day Adventist Church (Brazil) website, "Colportagem" [Canvassing]. Accessed February 4, 2020, <http://bit.ly/2J6tY11>.
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