



Headquarters Office of the Coral Sea Union Mission in Lae, Mandated Territory of New Guinea, 1968.

Photo courtesy of Milton McFarlane.

# Coral Sea Union Mission, Australasian Division

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## BARRY OLIVER

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.

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The Coral Sea Union Mission (CSUM) existed as a constituent union mission of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Australasian Division, between 1949 and 1972, when its name changed to the Papua

New Guinea Union Mission.<sup>1</sup>

## Territory and Statistics of the Coral Sea Union Mission

The Coral Sea Union Mission when first organized in 1949, was one of four unions in the Australasian Inter Union Conference, also known as the Australasian Division. Its headquarters were located at Memorial Avenue, Lae, Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea. In 1953 it divided into two unions and the Bismarck Solomons Union Mission formed, bringing to five the number of unions in the division

The territory of the CSUM as organized in 1949 was “Papua, the Mandated Territory of New Guinea, and the British Solomon Islands Protectorate.”<sup>2</sup> After reorganization in 1953, the territory of the CSUM consisted of “Papua and the Mainland of the Mandated Territory of New Guinea; comprising the Central Papuan, Eastern Highlands, Eastern Papuan, Madang, Morobe, Sepik, Western Highlands, and Western Papuan Missions.”<sup>3</sup>

The *1971 Annual Statistical Report of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists* listed the Coral Sea Union Mission as having nine local missions, which had a total of 166 churches. Church membership at the end of 1970 was 24, 185.<sup>4</sup> The total tithe receipts for the Union in 1970 were US\$210, 249.<sup>5</sup>

## Organizational History of the Coral Sea Union Mission

Year	Event
1908	The Adventist Church began in Papua with the arrival of S. W. Carr and Peni Tavodi. <sup>6</sup>
1914	Entering the Solomon Islands, Griffiths F. Jones established a mission station at Viru Harbour and then moved on to other sites in the Marovo Lagoon. <sup>7</sup>
1917	The territory of New Guinea was included as one small entity in a group of countries known as the Melanesian Mission. <sup>8</sup>
1918	Church leadership made plans for a North Queensland-Papua Mission. The recommendation was: “WHEREAS, The territory of the Queensland Conference as now fixed presents almost insurmountable difficulties for aggressive work being undertaken in the northern portion by the Queensland Conference; and WHEREAS, This northern section offers favorable opportunity for developing strong work, We Recommend, That the portion of Queensland to the north of the terminus of Brisbane-Rockhampton railway, together with Papua, be formed into a mission field under the supervision of the Union Conference, to be known as the North Queensland-Papua Mission.” <sup>9</sup> Pastor A. H. White was chosen as the superintendent of the mission with headquarters in Charters Towers. <sup>10</sup>
1921	The organization took the title “New Guinea Mission” in 1921. <sup>11</sup> At the Australasian Union Conference session in September 1922, the union secretary, W. G. Turner, reported that: “Owing to the difficulty in operating Papua from Queensland, the organization known as the North Queensland-Papua Mission has been dissolved, the two fields now working as separate missions under the direction of the Australasian Union Conference.” <sup>12</sup>
1924	Batuna becomes the headquarters for the Solomon Islands Mission. <sup>13</sup>
1928	A Papua Mission organized with headquarters at Bisiatabu with W. N. Lock as its the first superintendent. <sup>14</sup>

1932	The address of the Papua Mission changed to Bootless Bay, Port Moresby, Papua. <sup>15</sup>
1935	The address of the Papua Mission shifted to Mirigeda, Port Moresby, Papua. <sup>16</sup>
1945	Solomon Islands: after some 24 years at Batuna, the Solomon Island Mission headquarters transferred to a new base in the capital, Honiara. <sup>17</sup>
1945	A Papua-New Guinea Mission formed. With headquarters located in Port Moresby, it included all the territory of both the former Papua Mission and the previous New Guinea Mission. <sup>18</sup> The superintendent was R. A. R. Thrift. <sup>19</sup>
1946	The name of the Papua–New Guinea Mission changed to Papua North East New Guinea Mission. <sup>20</sup>
1947	The Solomon Islands Mission divided into three districts: the Western District which included Choiseul, Vella Lavella, Ranonga, Rendova, Kolumbangara, and Marovo; the Malaita District which included Malaita and Ysabel; and the Eastern District including Guadalcanal and Christoval. <sup>21</sup>
1949	The Coral Sea Union Mission organized to consist of four local missions: <sup>22</sup> The Bismarck Archipelago Mission--formerly part of the Papua-New Guinea Mission until it became a separate mission in 1947. Territory: New Britain, New Ireland, Bougainville, Buka, St. Matthias Group, the Admiralty Group and adjacent islands. The Northeast New Guinea Mission, organized in 1949. The Papuan Mission, reorganized in 1949. The Solomon Islands Mission.
1950	The Solomon Islands Mission separated into a Western Solomon Islands Mission and an Eastern Solomon Islands Mission. <sup>23</sup> Initially the headquarters of the Western Solomons Mission were at Batuna on the Marovo Lagoon, Western Province. But with the appointment of W. R Ferguson as mission president, the headquarters moved to Kukudu on the island of Kolumbangara. <sup>24</sup> The headquarters of the Eastern Solomon Islands Mission were at Kukum, Honiara, on the island of Guadalcanal. <sup>25</sup>
1953	The Coral Sea Union Mission divided into a Bismarck Solomons Union Mission and a reorganized Coral Sea Union Mission. The formation of the Bismarck Solomons Union Mission led to the following PNG missions: Bougainville Mission, organized in 1953, Inus; president: Cyril Pascoe. Manus Mission, organized in 1953, Manus; president: Karese Manovaki. New Britain Mission, organized in 1953, Rabaul; president: Eric A. Boehm. New Ireland Mission, organized in 1953, Kavieng; president: John Rongapitu. <sup>26</sup>  The Reorganized Coral Sea Union Mission now had the following missions: Central Papuan Mission, reorganized in 1949 and renamed in 1954, Ela Beach, Port Moresby; president: Laurence I. Howell. Eastern Highlands Mission, organized in 1953, Goroka; president: A. J. Campbell. Eastern Papua Mission, organized in 1953, Tufi; president: Ngava. Madang Mission, organized in 1949, reorganized in 1953, Madang; president: T. F. Judd. Morobe Mission, organized in 1953, Wau; president: John H. Newman. Sepik Mission, organized 1953, Wewak; president: S. H. Gander. Western Highlands Mission, organized 1953, Mt Hagen; president: F. J. Maberly. Western Papua Mission, organized 1953, Port Romilly; president: H. Martin Pascoe. <sup>27</sup>

PNGUM organized with 10 local missions:<sup>28</sup>

Bougainville Mission, organized 1953.

Central Papuan Mission, organized 1908.

Eastern Highlands Mission, organized 1953.

Madang Manus Mission, organized 1949 and reorganized 1953, 1972.

1972 Morobe Mission, organized 1953.

New Britain New Ireland Mission, organized 1953 and reorganized 1961, 1972.

North East Papuan Mission, organized 1953 and reorganized 1972.

Papuan Gulf Mission, organized 1954 and reorganized 1960.

Sepik Mission, organized 1953.

Western Highlands Mission, organized 1953.<sup>29</sup>

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## List of Executive Officers Since 1949

Presidents: H. White (1949-1955); J. B. Keith (1956-1964); O. D. F. McCutcheon (1964-1972).

Secretary-treasurers: E. A. Boehm (1949); C. A. Hart (1950-1952); L. L. Butler (1952-1960); J. M. Sherriff (1960-1968); E. R. Piez (1968-1972).

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### NOTES

1. Much of the information in this article comes from the personal knowledge and experience of the author who spent six years as an administrator in Papua New Guinea, and subsequently was the secretary and then president of the South Pacific Division. The author also acknowledges the assistance of Pauline Yorio, administrative assistant, Papua New Guinea Union Mission, in the compilation of data for this article.
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3. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Coral Sea Union Mission," page 89, accessed May 11, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1954.pdf>.
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