



North Angola Mission headquarters

Photo courtesy of Tito Mateus Zua.

North Angola Mission

TITO MATEUS ZUA

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M.A. (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A.), is an ordained pastor, who is currently serving as president of the North Angola Mission, in the North-Eastern Angola Union Mission. Prior to this, he served for many years as a district pastor, seven years as ministerial secretary, and five years as executive secretary for the North Association Mission of Seventh-day Adventists.

North Angola Mission is a subsidiary church administrative unit of the North-Eastern Angola Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists.

The territory of the North Angola Mission (NAM) comprises the following municipalities: Northern Luanda (Luanda, Cazenga, Cacuaco, Viana North, and Icolo), including Bengo and Zaire provinces. The Atlantic Ocean forms the western boundary of the mission territory. As of December 31, 2019, the mission had 69,021 baptized members in 147 organized churches situated in 34 districts. It had 11 ordained pastors, 26 interns, and 18

support staff.¹

The Origin of the Adventist Work in North Angola Mission

In 1950 a small group of believers existed in Luanda which congregated in the home of the Oliveira family, known as Koliengue, in Samba district. Soon the group received strong support with the arrival of a friend of Adventists from Portugal, a lawyer known as Dr. Vasconcelos Guimarães. He established himself in Angola and looked for an Adventist church in Luanda whose services he could attend, but there was no church in Luanda. Having discovered the place where the small group of believers met, he started to meet with them at the home of the Oliveira family, to study the Sabbath School lessons with the group and to frequently conduct the Bible study.² Desiring to give dignity to the faith they professed, they looked for another place to meet near the center of the city. Then they asked the union office in Huambo to send a worker to Luanda.

In 1951 a European missionary, Enoc V. Hermanson, was sent to Luanda to undertake a vigorous evangelistic work among the more than 25,000 Europeans.³ By 1952, there was as yet no organized church in Luanda, although some 20 to 30 people had begun gathering in Pastor Hermanson's home for Bible studies. Later, a new building was rented and furnished as a lecture hall,⁴ located at Tavares de Carvalho, 84th Street.

When Pastor O. Schubert, secretary of the education department for the Southern European Division, passed through Luanda in 1953, he attended Sabbath worship with a small group of "believers in the city, representing the various shades of color from white to black, even pure natives being permitted to join if they belonged to the 'assimilative' class."⁵ He reported to have enjoyed very much his first Sabbath fellowship with that group.

In 1955, when Pastor M. V. Campbell, president of the Southern European Division, visited Luanda, Pastor Americo de Jesus Rodrigues of the Luanda district showed the president a hall that had been rented as a meeting place for many years. He also showed the visitor a well-located piece of property that had been donated by Alberto Pereira da Silva, an Angolan businessman who loved the Adventist message, that was to be used for building a church.⁶

By 1957, when Angola and Mozambique constituted the Portuguese African Union Mission, the total union membership was 10,876, with about 25,000 Sabbath School members. In Angola, worship centers for people of European origin had been established in Luanda, Lobito, Mossamedes, Nova Lisboa (Huambo), and Benguela.⁷ By 1964, radio became an important evangelistic agency in Luanda, airing six weekly Voice of Prophecy broadcasts.⁸

The Luanda Evangelistic Center (now Luanda Central SDA Church), whose building was constructed at the site donated by the Angolan national, was inaugurated August 15 to 17, 1969,⁹ during a worship program of praise and thanksgiving to God for the completion of the house of worship. The program was directed by Pastor Armando Casaca, president of the Angola Union Mission. He was accompanied by Juvenal Gomes, the secretary-

treasurer of the union.

To continue promoting the growth of the work and to conserve the gains already made, Pastor Manuel Salustiano de Castro, along with his wife and daughter, was sent from Brazil to Luanda in November 1970 to serve as pastor for what was known as the Luanda European Church.¹⁰ After Angola's political independence from Portugal in 1975, the Luanda Central congregation came under Angolan leadership and, since then, 17 pastors have provided spiritual care. Pastors who continue to serve at present include Pastors Inoc Domingos Jones and José Cambango Ngola.¹¹

Meanwhile, the long outstanding need for an evangelistic center for the African Adventist believers who lived in Musseques, the periphery area of the city of Luanda, demanded special attention. The Angola Union sent a Black pastor named Domingos José Vunge to assist Pastor Salustiano de Castro. A plot of land was bought from the family of Alberto Pereira da Silva, along 2nd Avenue in Cazenga's north industrial area, where an evangelistic center was to be built. Here, two houses were built, one for the pastor and the other one for a teacher. Also, a school consisting of two classrooms, with a table in each, and another room for sewing and cooking were built. In this school, more than 150 children were enrolled to study a combined curriculum of secular and Christian education.¹²

A church building was erected on the same plot of land, where African Adventist believers and visitors could comfortably conduct their worship services. Preparations for realizing this dream became a reality at the beginning of 1972. The Cazenga Patrício Central SDA Church was inaugurated on April 7, 1973, which became a historic day for the Adventist church in Luanda. In a few years' time, this church will celebrate 50 years of existence in Angola. In 1977 the Seventh-day Adventist message reached Bengo Province in the Pango, Aluquém municipality. Ten years later, in 1989, the Boa Vista-Porto-Quipiri Church was dedicated in a service led by Pastor Gasper Bunga. Many other church congregations emerged in Bengo province over the years.¹³

In the Soyo municipality of Zaire province, Maria Dias Vemba arrived on February 4, 1982, from Catumbela, Benguela province. She was accompanied by her husband, Sebastião Vemba. As a baptized and active member from Catumbela Central SDA Church, she could not find a Seventh-day Adventist Church in Soyo. However, she did not want to live there without worshipping. Therefore, she decided to start worshipping in her own backyard, with her five children, under a coconut tree. This is how on October 7, 1982, the first Adventist group began worshipping in Soyo.¹⁴

Two years later, in 1984, the group had grown to 17 members. During this time, Maria Dias Vemba served as a missionary, leading the group for 18 years. A hall was rented as a church facility on October 17, 2015, for the Soyo Central SDA Church by Pastor Evaristo Hamuiela. Pastor Evaristo Hamuiela was the director of the health and temperance department of the former North Angola Association.

In 1982 the North Angola Association Mission was organized with 8,425 baptized members who congregated in 28 churches and owned 19 church buildings. The territory of the North Association Mission consisted of the

Bengo, Cabinda, Kwanza North, Luanda, Malanje, Uige, and Zaire provinces. Other association missions organized in Angola were: Central Association Mission in 1983, comprising Benguela, Huambo, and Kwanza South provinces; and East Association Mission in 1985, comprising Lunda North and Lunda South provinces.

In the Mbanza Congo municipality of Zaire province, there was no Adventist presence for a long time. Finally, in 2005, a group of people from different parts of the country, serving in the military or police force, met for the first time on November 11 in the Kuimba village neighborhood at Brother Anastácio's residence. This served as the opening of the first Sabbath School in Mbanza Congo city. Those who were present on that day included: Anastácio (owner of the residence), António Paulo António, Filipe Mendonça, Daniel Penza, Laurindo Chindumbo, and Francisco Desejo. Among these, only three were baptized members. The church in Mbanza Congo was organized on February 12, 2017, by Pastor Manuel Panzo, who was leading the church in Mbanza Congo.¹⁵

The North Angola Association Mission continued to grow throughout its seven provinces. By December 2017, its baptized membership had reached 130,004, congregating in 285 churches, in a population of 7,750,000. The vast territory of the North Angola Association extended for 261,518 square kilometers.¹⁶ It proved to be a continuing challenge to administer the seven provinces from Luanda, the capital city of Angola. A need for realigning the territory became clearer with every year that passed. It became urgent that something be done.

Organization of the North Angola Mission

Church membership in Luanda continued to multiply over the years, and the city's expansion led to a phenomenal increase in the number of congregations within it. The work of the church administrators increased considerably with the addition of new church branches with over 300 members. It became a great challenge for the association administrators to reach the churches in the remote areas outside Luanda because of the precarious road network and the vastness of the territory. There was a great need to realign the territory.

In December 2017, the North Angola Association Mission was dissolved to create three missions, namely: Northeast Angola Mission, South Luanda and Cabinda Mission, and the present North Association Mission, which inherited 65,198 members.

The North Angola Mission held its first constituent assembly on January 28, 2018, to elect its departmental directors, and to constitute the 27-member executive committee.¹⁷ The mission administrators elected were: Pastor Tito Mateus Zua (president), Francisco Esteves Domingos (executive secretary), and Paulo Ribeiro da Costa (chief finance officer).

Institutions

The NAM has 42 registered schools in operation. Of these, 26 are primary schools and 16 are secondary schools.

Future Outlook

The current major challenge for the NAM is the need for financial growth, membership growth, and infrastructure development—including the construction of the mission’s administrative offices. The other main objective is to plan the penetration of areas that have not yet been reached by the message, especially in the provinces of Bengo and Zaire.

List of Presidents

North Angola Association Mission: Domingos Suquina (1982-1986), Bela Vista Felix (1986-1991), Malaquias Ernesto (1992-1997), Simão Queta (1998-2008), Dinis Cuexila (2008-2010), Daniel Cem (2010-2015), Augusto Artur (2016-2017).

North Angola Mission: Tito Mateus Zua (2018-present).

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