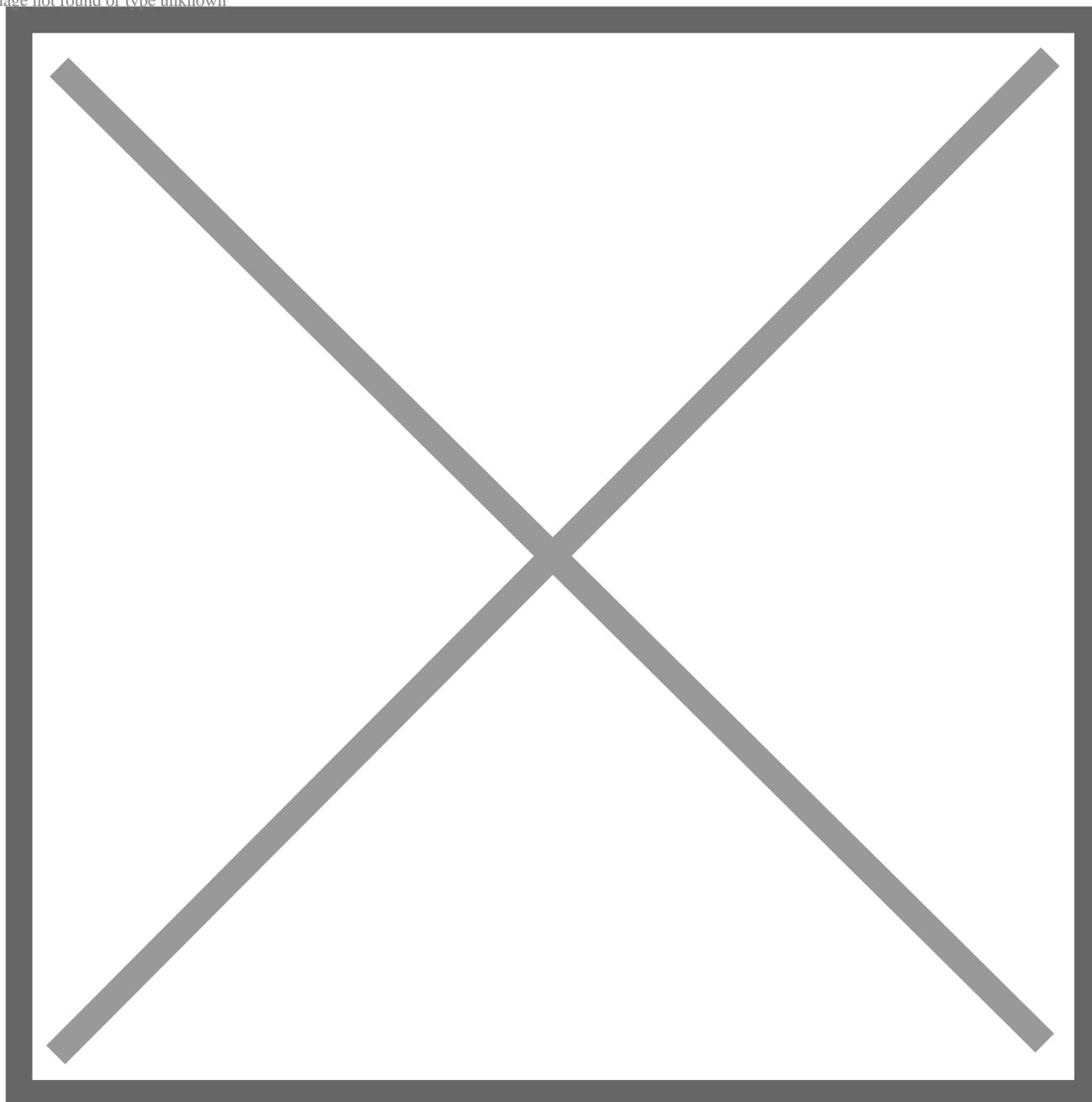


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South Tabasco Conference

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The South Tabasco Conference is located in Tabasco's mountain range, Mexico. It includes the municipalities of Jalapa, Tacotalpa, Teapa and the Centro districts of Primero de Mayo, Parrilla and Mercedes in the state of Tabasco. The productive economic activities are livestock and agriculture. Agricultural activities are oriented to the cultivation of cocoa, corn, and beans, but banana is the main crop for consumption and commercialization. The territory of the South Tabasco Conference is located between the rivers Oxolotán, Amatán, De la Sierra, Puxcatán, and Agua

Blanca.

As of June 30, 2018, in a total population of 203,801, the South Tabasco Conference had 16,238 members, 81 organized churches, and 52 groups, all organized in 19 districts.²

Origins of Church in Territory

The gospel reached the Tabasco mountain range area during the late 1920s and early 1930s. In 1934, an unknown colporteur sold religious books at the Monte Claro farm to Jesus Sanchez Balcazar. It was there in Monte Claro that they started studying the Bible and discovered Sabbath as the true day of worship. One day, Jose Castrejon, who also was a colporteur, had a conversation about the Bible with Jesus Sanchez Balcazar. He spoke about the new faith he had accepted and after that they began to meet on Saturday.

The missionary Raul M. Sanchez and Pastor Jose Castrejon, who subsequently married one of Sanchez Jimenez's daughters, continued to visit the small El Triunfo and Monte Claro churches. Sanchez and Castrejon instructed the members and nurtured them in the faith, until they managed to build a church in 1949.

Around the same time, José Salas and his daughter Aracely, who had returned from Villahermosa to reside in Teapa, began receiving studies by Raúl M. Sánchez. They met on Saturdays from 1931 to 1935 in the Tecomajaca neighborhood. After several defections among the first believers, the meeting place of the church was changed in 1935, to 127 Juan N. Fernández Street, Centro, Teapa. The first converts of the city of Teapa were the Sánchez Jiménez family who came from the El Triunfo ranch, and the Balboa Sánchez family. In 1951, the Central Teapa Church was built. The members from its inception had the desire to take the message to other places and so the message spread to Tacotalpa, Pomoca, Cerro Blanco and other surrounding communities of the Tabasco mountain range.

Events Leading to Organization of Conference

On October 5, 2014, the Southeast Mexican Union Mission requested of the Inter-American Division the restructuring of the East Tabasco Mission by dividing it into two fields - a conference and a mission. Following the approval of the request for change of status and division of the territory, a constituency meeting, attended by 139 delegates, was held on February 8, 2015. The territory was divided into the East Tabasco Mission with 14 districts and the South Tabasco Conference with 17 districts.

On August 8, 2015, the Southeast Mexican Union appointed the officers of the East Tabasco Mission. The first quadrennial congress of the East Tabasco Mission was held August 9-10, 2015, when the formal division of the territory occurred, and gave rise to the South Tabasco Conference. The congress delegates elected the new officers of the South Tabasco Conference for the period 2015-2019. Those elected were Jaime Daniel Velázquez as president, Humberto Lara as secretary, and Audentino E. Gómez Cruz as treasurer.³

Conference Development

The previous territory consisted of nine municipalities including the metropolitan area of the city of Villahermosa, which in turn was divided into thirty districts. At the time of the division, the mission had 19,875 church members, 112 organized churches, 103 congregations, 106 branch Sabbath schools, and a group of colporteurs. The East Tabasco Mission had four schools with elementary and secondary levels.

When the South Tabasco Conference was inaugurated on August 9, 2015, in the city of Villahermosa Tabasco, it had 13,726 members, 70 organized churches, 71 congregations, 47 companies, and 17 pastors in the four municipalities that it covered.

The members of this conference have participated actively in small groups. In 2016 there were 678 small groups and by 2017, the number had grown to 835. Additionally, there were 1,854 missionary teams offering Bible courses to the community. One area of focus of the conference's program for the fulfillment of the mission was the youth ministry that created new adventurer, pathfinder, and master guide clubs. In 2016, there was a total of 101 active clubs and by 2017, the territory added 30 more clubs. The children's ministry has also grown; in 2017, churches conducted 147 vacation Bible schools, reaching more than 3,329 non-Adventist children in the community. Currently, the South Tabasco Conference has 19 districts, 81 organized churches, 66 congregations, and 52 branch Sabbath schools.

Although the South Tabasco Conference was organized in August 2015, its programs were formally initiated in 2016. The evangelistic model called "By the Spirit of the Lord" was launched. The main purpose of these programs was to train the pastors and revive the laity so that they could subsequently instruct the members of the church. It is hoped that revival and reform would empower the church to complete the mission.

Stewardship has been an area of focus, in order to achieve greater fidelity of the members in the plan of systematic benevolence. Fidelity has been promoted through training councils for pastors and members. Those who attended the councils then visited the members in their homes. The officers of the conference also visit the churches to instruct and train members.

The South Tabasco Conference has constantly worked together with the leaders of the Southeast Mexican Union.

These in turn, frequently visit the conference to train, coach, and motivate the departmental leaders. This has created a harmonious relationship between both organizations.

List of Presidents

Jaime Daniel Velázquez (2015-2017); Humberto Lara Pérez (2017-).

SOURCES

Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2016.

South Mexican Union Mission Executive Committee minutes, August 8, 2015, South Mexican Union Mission archives, Merida, Yucatan, Mexico.

NOTES

1. "South Tabasco Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2019), 144.?
2. Ibid.?
3. South Mexican Union Mission Executive Committee minutes, August 8, 2015, South Mexican Union Mission archives.?

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