



Honduras Atlantic Conference headquarters.  
Photo courtesy of Honduras Union Mission.

# Atlantic Honduras Conference

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Atlantic Honduras Conference is an organization that is a part of the Honduras Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists. Its headquarters are located in the Vista de Palmira neighborhood, Main Street, La Ceiba, Atlántida. Its activities are governed by principles based on the model constitution of the Inter-American Division (IAD) of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The Atlantic Honduras Conference territory includes the departments of Atlántida, Colón, Gracias a Dios, and a part of Yoro (from Olanchito to Jocón).<sup>1</sup> The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists statistical report for the first quarter of 2019 recorded that Atlantic Honduras Conference had 125 churches and 50 groups, a membership of 11,122, and a total of 83 active employees?

## Origins and Development of Atlantic Honduras Conference

The city of La Ceiba, Atlántida, has been an important site for the Adventist movement in Honduras as the closest coastal port to the Bay Islands, from where the Adventist message first came to Central America. Pioneers identified La Ceiba as a very important place for the development of Adventism throughout the country. Between 1936-1956, long before the field was created, the Honduras Union Mission headquarters were based in La Ceiba.

After the creation of Northwest Honduras Mission, more attention was given to the Atlantic coast. In 1998, Pastor Pedro Simpson was appointed pastor in La Ceiba and managed to break a scheme that had somehow prevented the progress of the work. The following year, 1999, Pastor Olger Villalobos replaced Pastor Simpson and followed up on a small group program that Pastor Javier Mejía had started in 1997. By the time Pastor Adán Ramos arrived in

August 2000, he found a team of workers ready to harvest the field. The years 2000-2003 were intense; as new churches were planted in La Ceiba, organized churches grew from four to 12. Finances grew remarkably, converting this sector and its churches into the major contributors to Northwest Honduras Mission. "Lula Gregory" school and La Ceiba Adventist Educational Center also rebounded. Around that time, laboratory, library, and auditorium buildings were constructed.<sup>3</sup>

Mid-Central American Union Mission, which was created in 2003, decided to restructure Northwest Honduras Mission on July 7, 2003, and create an experimental field named the Atlantic Honduras Mission so that, sometime soon after, it could become officially recognized and organized.<sup>4</sup> On November 14, 2003, Northwest Honduras Mission voted to reorganize its territory on January 1, 2004.<sup>5</sup> When the decision to create Atlantic Honduras Mission was made, many candidates arose as possible presidents. Pastor Alfredo Argueta, the union president, believed that Pastor Winston Simpson was the right person, but Pastor Javier Mejía, president of the mother field, thought that Pastor Adán Ramos was the ideal person since he had directly contributed to the development of the work in that place. As soon as both presidents came to an agreement, Pastor Adán Ramos was appointed president, and Mrs. Maxine Bodden was appointed secretary-treasurer.<sup>6</sup>

The office started operations in a building adjacent to the central church on Avenida 14 de Julio in Barrio El Iman, La Ceiba. In December 2003, this area had nine district pastors; by January 2004, this same area organized as an experimental mission had 14 district pastors. The cities comprising the districts were: Tela, San Juan Pueblo, Santa Ana, Ceiba Central, Ceiba Pizzaty, Ceiba Inglesa, Ceiba Palmira, Jutiapa, Saba, Olanchito, Tocoa Central, Tocoa Buenos Aires, Trujillo, and Puerto Lempira.<sup>7</sup>

In June 2005, Mid-Central American Union Mission made a few pastoral changes. Pastor Adán Ramos was transferred to Central Honduras Mission with headquarters in Tegucigalpa, and Pastor Pedro Simpson returned to La Ceiba as president. To support the rapid growth of the experimental mission, Mid-Central American Union Mission made this request on November 14, 2006: "Voted: To request the IAD that the experimental mission of Atlantic Honduras be named as a Region of Mid-Central American Union Mission for a period of two years."<sup>8</sup> This action allowed the territory to develop rapidly and, later, become a conference.

During Pastor Simpson and Mrs. Bodden's administration, a three-story building was constructed near the Adventist school in Vista de Palmira to serve as headquarters for the field. The building was inaugurated on November 11, 2007.

In 2008, Mid-Central American Union Mission voted to make another important request to the IAD about changing the status of the region to a conference.<sup>9</sup> On August 10, 2009,<sup>10</sup> the status change of the Atlantic Honduras region to Atlantic Honduras Conference took place at the Palma Real Beach Resort hotel in Jutiapa. It should be noted that this field went directly from a region to a conference. It was never fully constituted as a mission; instead, it changed status from an experimental mission to a region to a conference. Pastor Israel Leito, IAD president, presided the status change session. Pastor Pedro Simpson was appointed president with Mrs. Maxine Bodden as secretary-treasurer of the conference. The Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook of 2010 first listed the territory of Atlantic Honduras Conference and describes the territory identically to the yearbook of 2019.

## Institutions of Atlantic Honduras Conference

Adventist Bilingual Christian School and Instituto Adventista Ceibeño is located in Vista de Palmira, La Ceiba, Atlántida. Pastor H. C. Goodrich informed the General Conference that a school in La Ceiba had begun operating in 1905. Its first teacher was a young Belizean woman whose name is unknown.<sup>11</sup>

In the early 1920s, Pastor Parmele, union president, asked the General Conference if he could arrange for the services of Dr. A. L. Gregory as a self-supported missionary to Honduras. The General Conference sent the reply: "VOTED: to inform Pastor Parmele that we have no objection to the making of arrangements with Dr. Gregory to travel to Honduras to do self-supported work, provided it is clear that the General Conference does not assume any responsibility for financial aid or transportation costs."<sup>12</sup> Upon arrival, Dr. Gregory and his wife, Lula, went to work with the school in La Ceiba, giving enormous support to the development of the institution. Thus, in recognition of this support, the leaders named the school "Lula Gregory Adventist School."

In 1926, Pastor E. J. Lorntz, mission president, sent a work report of the previous year, where he mentioned that the La Ceiba school had been operating for many years and that it had an enrollment of 30 students in 1925.<sup>13</sup> For 2019, it offered two pre-basic grades, nine basic-level bilingual grades, and high school in Spanish. The staff consisted of 28 employees, of which 20 were teachers and eight were administration and service employees.

San Francisco Adventist School is located in the San Francisco municipality, Atlántida. Around 1940, Pastor Orley Ford began construction of an Adventist mid-level boarding school there. The school began to grow successfully. Industrial students were engaged in banana plantations that exported to the United States. The school was affected by unfair competition from a banana company, which made it impossible for the school to export their product and incurred a great loss. Since money was owed for the fruit plants and for other commitments the institution had financially acquired, the union treasurer suggested to sell the student complex and settle the pending debts. Pastor Ford opposed the sale but had no choice other than to accept the loss of the institution he had built with much sacrifice. Ownership of the school transferred to the Honduran government, and, as of 2019, the school functions as a forestry school.<sup>14</sup>

Luz del Valle Basic Center is located in Tocoa, Colón. It dates back to 1994, founded as a result of the church brethren's desire to own a school with an Adventist philosophy. Professor Carlos Paguada proposed the school's name.<sup>15</sup> It began operations at the central Adventist temple in Tocoa, where it still stands. It started with three primary grades and, as of 2019, offers pre-basic level and six primary grades. The staff consists of eight employees, of which five are teachers and three are administration and service personnel.

Olanchito Maranatha Adventist School is located on a 3.5 acre site in Olanchito, Yoro. It was founded in 1995 as a result of church members' desire for Adventist education. With Pastor Saul Ordonez's support, it began with six primary grades at the facilities of Olanchito Adventist Church.<sup>16</sup> As of 2019, it offers six primary grades. The staff is composed of six people, four teachers, and two service personnel.

Pizzaty Adventist Bilingual School is located in Colonia Pizzaty, La Ceiba, Atlántida. The school began operations in 1999 resulting from the catastrophe of Hurricane Mitch, which shattered the bridge that connected the east side of the city to the west side. The Adventist school was located on the west side. The brethren in the east worried about their children's education and decided to start a school as an extension of "Lula Gregory Adventist School." The school began with six elementary grades at the house of Sister Lila de Martinez. The following year, it transferred to classrooms at Pizzaty Adventist Church.<sup>17</sup> As of 2019, it offers bilingual education with two grades at the pre-basic level and nine grades at the basic level. The staff is composed of 16 employees, of which 12 are teachers and four are administration and service employees.

Gala Stereo Radio Network is a radio station that belongs to Atlantic Honduras Conference. Through platforms such as radio frequencies like 96.7 for the city of La Ceiba and 104.1 for the city of Olanchito, a website, an app, and social networks, the radio network fulfills the mission of preaching the gospel to the whole world. It is located in Vista de Palmira, La Ceiba, Atlántida.

The first attempt to start an Adventist radio station for La Ceiba was initiated by the brethren of Central Honduras Church in 2003, before even the experimental mission existed and while Pastor Adán Ramos was still district pastor. A small building at the front of the church was constructed to serve as a radio station. The following year, the experimental mission began operations, and this building served as the headquarters for the field. Since the radio station was still just a project and had no frequencies, the mission offered to pay a monthly rent of L5,000 HNL to the central church while the radio station was installed. The idea was that, instead of paying rent elsewhere, the money would remain in the church by renting the building.<sup>18</sup>

Since the Atlantic Honduras experimental mission was just starting operations, the radio project was put on hold. However, the brethren did not forget it. In 2009, at the session that changed the status of the mission into a conference, the plans and recommendations committee voted that, for its next session in 2013, the purchase of a radio frequency should be reported. Pastor Pedro Simpson assumed this challenge, and FM 96.9 was acquired on July 1, 2010. On August 1, transmission began under the name *Stereo Gala* with the slogan, "The Voice of Hope." Formerly, FM 96.9 was known as *Radio Michelle*. The following year, on August 1, 2011, a new radio studio was inaugurated at the conference's headquarters in Vista de Palmira. In April 2012, under the administration of Pastor Edwin Valiente as president and Gredy Villalobos as treasurer, FM 104.3 was acquired to broadcast *Stereo Gala* in Olanchito. In June 2012, the new frequency officially started transmissions.<sup>19</sup> As of 2019, the radio station staff consists of one full-time employee, two *ad honorem*, and many volunteers.

## List of Presidents

Adan Ramos (2004-2005); Pedro Simpson (2005-2011); Edwin Valiente (2011-2017); Luis Castellanos (2017-2019); Josue Trochez (2019- ).

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