



Colombian Islands Mission headquarters.

Photo courtesy of North Colombia Union Conference.

Colombian Islands Mission

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Jonathan Gallego, B.A. (Colombia Adventist University Corporation, Medellin, Colombia), is the president of Colombian Islands Mission of North Colombian Union Conference. He began his ministry in the District of Zaragoza, Antioquia, and was ordained in 2009.

Colombian Islands Mission is located in the archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia, and Santa Catalina. The archipelago is located 480 kilometers northwest from the coast of Colombia, 180 kilometers east from Central America, and 400 kilometers southwest from Jamaica. It comprises an area of 44 kilometers across three

inhabited islands.¹ Colombian Islands Mission was a part of the former Colombian Union Mission until it divided into two unions. It is now a part of North Colombian Union Conference.

The mission and North Colombian Union Conference are part of the Inter-American Division. Colombian Islands Mission has 10 churches and 1,018 members, and the archipelago has a population of 77,896. Its offices are located on Carrera 5A 1-59, behind Bahia Sardina Hotel, San Andrés, Colombia.²

Colombian Islands Mission Institutions

Colegio Modelo Adventista. It began operations in 1901 at Theodore Robinson's initiative. When he heard the evangelic message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, he brought Professor Smith, grandson of Pastor Urias Smith, to hear the message. Thus, with his family and other interested neighbors, *Escuela Modelo Adventista* was started. The school is located at Carrera 5 No. 1-59, Sector Sprat Bight, San Andrés, Isla Colombia.

Theodoro Robinson Bilingual School. This school's headquarters operates out of a two-story building. The first floor hosts two classrooms, a corridor, administrative offices, bathrooms, a fresh, spacious patio, the auditorium, and a separate parking lot. The second floor has four well-ventilated classrooms.

Publications Agency

When Colombian Islands Mission had Mirto Presentacion as president and José Omar Aranda as treasurer, a publishing agency was started and named *Agencia Isleña Publicaciones*. It operated in the same facilities of Colombian Islands Mission. On January 26, 1999, its name was changed; it is now *Ediser Islas E.U.*

Origins of Seventh-day Adventist Work in Mission Territory

The start of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's work in the Colombian Islands is linked to people who left homes, homelands, and family to spread the Adventist message throughout the Caribbean Islands. Pastor Frank C. Hutchins and his wife, Cora, left San Francisco, California, on November 16, 1892, with the objective to bring the gospel to the Caribbean Islands.

While in the Bay Islands of Honduras, Pastor Hutchins informed the General Conference of the need for a ship to move between the islands to do the church work more effectively. The petition was granted, and a 35-ton, 15.5-meter-long schooner was built and named "The Herald." This vessel allowed Pastor Hutchins to travel along the coast of Central America and the adjacent islands, including San Andrés and Providencia. Through this, the Adventist message reached the Colombian island territory. In 1898, Pastor Hutchins requested the help of another missionary to support the work in Providencia and San Andrés. In response to this request, Pastor J. J. Evans from Michigan arrived to support the work.

On one of the trips of "The Herald" at the end of 1899, the ship's crew was surprised by a hurricane and unable to continue towards Providencia, so they had to remain in San Andrés until the storm passed. They were hosted by Captain Theodore Robinson. They shared the gospel with him and his family, sold him some books, and left at the start of 1900. When they visited Captain Robinson again, they found that he and eight other people were keeping the Sabbath. Pastor Frank C. Hutchins preached and baptized them. This group was the first to be baptized in the Colombian Islands.

With help from Captain Robinson and Doctor John Eccles, who had come to support the work that Pastor Frank was developing in the islands, they continued preaching the gospel in San Andrés and attending to the sick through medical treatments.

Pastor Hutchins's team traveled in "The Herald" to Providencia to preach the Adventist message in 1900. He was supported by Brother Frank Mosebar, Doctor Eccles, and two colporteurs, Haughton and Mateland, as they preached about Jesus's Second Coming. They sold books and helped many people regain their health through necessary medical treatments. At the time, 14 people were baptized.

Captain Robinson asked for a teacher to come to the island and provide his children with an education based on the principles taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He promised to provide what was necessary for a teacher to live on the island. Through this, Samuel Parker Smith, grandson of Uriah Smith, was sent to San Andrés, and the first Adventist school in Colombia was opened in 1901.

In early 1902, the first Adventist church in Colombia was organized in the town of San Luis. That same year, Pastor Frank C. Hutchins became ill with yellow fever and, despite all medical efforts, died at age 33 in Bocas del Toro, Panama.

These were some of the main events that marked the beginning of the Adventist work in the islands and in Colombia.

Events that Led to Organization of Colombian Islands Mission

Numerous changes occurred over the years before Colombian Islands Mission was organized. The General Conference organized West Caribbean Conference with Panama, Colombia, Costa Rica, the east part of Nicaragua, and San Andrés, Providencia, and the Corn Islands as its territory in 1919. This field was under the direct supervision of the General Conference and had Pastor Max Trummer as president.

In 1927, the Colombian Islands were assigned to Panama Conference and remained so for the next 20 years. In 1947, Colombia-Venezuela Union Mission voted to make a request to the Inter-American Division that the Colombian Islands be part of the union since they were a part of Central American Union Mission at that time. In 1951, the Colombian Islands became part of Atlantic Colombia Mission after a vote from the Colombia-Venezuela Union Mission board.

Official Organization of Colombian Islands Mission

In 1955, Colombian Islands Mission was organized. It was duly recognized as a fully-developed mission in 1958.

Mission Development

After the start of the Adventist work in the Colombian Islands, the church experienced a gradual development since the baptisms of the first eight members of the church in San Andrés and of 14 members in Providencia in 1900.

The Adventist school in San Andrés was started in 1901, and the Adventist school in Providencia was started in 1907. In 1902, the first Adventist church was organized in the town of San Luis on the island of San Andrés. The church in Providencia reported faster membership growth than in San Andrés, and, in 1911, the construction of the church at Rocky Point was completed. In 1924, a church was organized in Santa Isabel on the island of Providencia. In 1940, the decision was made to form a new church in the north part of San Andrés. In 1941, a plot of land was acquired in Sprat Bigth, where the mission office operates today.

In 1955, Colombian Islands Mission was organized. The 1960s-1970s period is recognized as the “Golden Age” of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its institutions in that mission’s field. The church work grew under the administration of Pastor R. T. Rankin, who had a vision that was ahead of his time. New churches were built, including the Central Colombian Church, which could seat 500 people.

A school was built, achieving a grand development in the church work and the schools on San Andrés and Providencia. *Colegio Modelo Adventista* especially achieved remarkable growth, becoming an emblematic institution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Colombia. The mission offices were also built in this time, and they operate from the same location today. Later, Pastor Mario Robinson became president of Colombian Islands Mission. He helped consolidate the work in the islands, and the development of important activities began in the territory. A new dimension was given to youth ministry and the different clubs.

Records of agreements reached at meetings exist from that time on. Other named leaders continued the work. Many were missionaries to Colombia, but others, such as Pastor Jeddy Hooker, Pastor Vanston Archbold, and Pastor Alverdo Christopher, were local.

Prospects for Development of Mission

Recently, Colombian Islands Mission had an awakening in missionary work, and hundreds of people have given their lives to the Lord.

In 2015, *Colegio Modelo Adventista*, one of the flagships of Adventist education in Colombia, returned to the downtown location. It was there for many years and reached its peak in the historic enrollment of 1,600

students. However, at the end of 2015, the institution only had 130 students and was considered in serious threat of closure.

During the council held by the end of the year, the decision was made to return the school to its previous location, and the institution had about 350 students. The administration hopes to raise student enrollment to above 600 in 2020. With the construction of the facilities of *Colegio Modelo Adventista*, it is expected to achieve established objectives.

The mission plans to achieve several objectives:

1. Organize at least five new churches and exceed the number of 1,000 royal members throughout the mission territory
2. Establish centers of influence and centers of healthy living in San Andrés and in Providencia through projects that are in the process of being carried out
3. Strengthen the missionary commitment of the brethren in the islands, grow in the work of small groups, and strengthen family life

The major challenge is to lay groundwork so the mission can achieve a change in status.

List of Presidents

Fulton Archbold (1955-1958); A. T. Rankin (1958-1975); Mario Robinson (1975-1977); Nataniel García (1978); Arturo Weisheim (1978-1979); Fidel Merchán (1979-1981); Esteban Beleño (1982-1983); Mirto Presentación (1983-1986); Jeddy Hooker (1986-1991); Jaime Penna (1991-1992); Carlos Quintana (1993); Eliseo Bustamante (1993); Vanston Archbold H. (1994-2000); Alverdo Christopher (2001-2005); Alejandro Veloza (2005-2010); Vanston I. Archbold M. (2011-2013); Al R. Powell (2014-2015); Heraldou Douff (2016-2017); Jonathan Gallego (2018-).

SOURCES

"Archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina." *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. Accessed 2020.

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NOTES

1. "Archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina," *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*, accessed 2020,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archipelago_of_San_Andr%C3%A9s,_Providencia_and_Santa_Catalina.
2. "Colombian Islands Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, accessed 2020,
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