



Cape Town

Photo courtesy of Morne Venter.

South Africa, Republic of

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The Republic of South Africa is one of the countries that constitute the territory of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

Vital Statistics

The territory of the Republic of South Africa constitutes the major part of the Southern Africa Union Conference (SAU), within the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division (SID) of Seventh-day Adventists. Four of the eight local conferences that comprise the SAU are situated in South Africa. Church Statistics (2019) for South Africa were as follows: Churches –1,195; Companies–426; Members–145,268; Ordained ministers–194; Licensed ministers–95. The headquarters of the church are situated in Bloemfontein, the capital city of the Free State Province. The population of the country is estimated at 58,780,000.

Statistics (2019) for the conferences were as follows: *Cape Conference*: churches–506; members–45,924; ordained ministers–65; licensed ministers–31. *Northern Conference*: churches–119; members–21,861; ordained ministers–45; licensed ministers–21. *Trans-Orange Conference*: churches–382; members–57,989; ordained ministers–53; licensed ministers–19. *KwaZulu Natal-Free State Conference*: churches–186; members–19,494; ordained ministers–31; licensed ministers–24.¹

Additional statistics for South Africa (2019) were as follows: Adventist Deaths Per Thousands–1.53; General Population Deaths Per Thousand–9.00; Church Membership Per Ten Thousand Population–25; Population Per Membership Ratio–406; Percentage Net Growth–4 over the last year, and 64 over the last 10 years.²

Overview

The Republic of South Africa (RSA) is the southernmost country on the continent of Africa. Its subtropical location accounts for its moderately warm weather conditions. The country receives most of its rainfall during summer, except for the Western Cape Province, which receives its most abundant rainfall in winter.

South Africa has a land surface area of 1,220,813 square kilometers and had a population of 55.7 million in 2016.³ The Black African population constitutes 81 percent of the entire population while the White population is estimated at 8 percent, the indigenous population (called "Coloured population" in South Africa) 9 percent, and the Indian/Asian population 2 percent. Unemployment in South Africa is estimated at 29.1 percent of the population currently. RSA recognizes eleven official languages, including isiZulu, English, isiXhosa, and Afrikaans as its most popular languages. Most South Africans can speak at least two or more of the official languages. "Life expectancy at birth for 2019 is estimated at 61.5 years for males and 67.7 years for females. The infant mortality rate for 2019 is estimated at 22.1 per 1,000 live births."⁴ The country has an estimated 13.5 percent of its population living with HIV and AIDS.

The people. The first known people to occupy South Africa were the nomadic hunter-gatherers, known as the San.⁵ They were known as hunter-gatherers because the males hunted game for meat while the females gathered plants for food. The remnant of the San are commonly known as the 'Bushman,' and small numbers survive in the Kalahari Desert.⁶ Following them, Khoikhoi shepherds settled in the southwestern region of

Southern Africa.⁷ Like the San, they were a nomadic tribe who hardly established permanent homes but often moved with changed weather conditions in order to find warmer territories and food for themselves and their livestock. Due to their similar lifestyles, some of the Sans and the Khoikhois intermarried and became known as the Khoisan.

Later, African pastoralists known as the Bantu people since they spoke Bantu languages (popular African languages) descended from the north of South Africa. These people settled mainly in the northeastern regions of South Africa since the central region was a desert land, and the west region was predominantly occupied by the Khoisan. Peaceful relations existed between the Khoisan and the Bantus. These tribes often traded tools, and the Bantus influenced the Khoisan to abandon their nomadic lifestyle and settle in their territory as farmers domesticating animals and cultivating crops.⁸

The Dutch first arrived in South Africa in 1652 when the Dutch East India Company established a refreshment station in Cape Town to supply their ships with fresh goods on their trade route from Europe to its colonies in South and Southeast Asia. The indigenous Khoisan people, who occupied the Cape, were driven inland after their resistance of the Dutch. Jan van Riebeeck (1619–1677), a colonial administrator, is considered the founder of Cape Town and became the first commander of the Cape.⁹

In the early nineteenth century, the British occupied the Cape to prevent this strategic settlement to fall into the hands of the French during the Napoleonic wars. During this period intermittent warfare ensued between the European colonialists and the native Africans.¹⁰ Zulus under the leadership of Shaka gained control of the southeastern territory. The descendants of the Dutch settlers, the Voortrekkers, expanded northward due to accentuated divisions between the Boer farmers and the British administration. After defeating the Zulus at the Battle of Blood River, the Voortrekkers established the Republic of Natalia. The British then annexed Natal, thus occupying both coastal colonies, the Cape and Natal. Africans “lived in their own autonomous societies.”¹¹ The Voortrekkers eventually formed two republics in the interior of South Africa, which appeared to be largely uninhabited areas. These two republics were the South African Republic in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. Only White males had political rights in these Boer republics.

Political developments. In the second half of the nineteenth century, minerals such as diamonds and gold were discovered in Kimberley and the Transvaal. These regions were governed by the Boers who lacked investment capital, and they soon lost control over these mine fields to the British. This spiked one of the bloodiest wars in South Africa from 1899 to 1902 between the British and the Boers for the control of the mining fields. During this war, commonly known as the Anglo-Boer War, the British lost 22,000 men, the Boers 34,000, and more than 15,000 Black South Africans were killed.¹² The British eventually abandoned the war and negotiated a long-term political settlement that put the local White community in charge of a self-governing united South Africa.¹³

The Union of South Africa, comprising the Cape, Natal, Transvaal, and the Free State, was established on May 31, 1910. Legislation “restricted political and property rights to whites at the expense of blacks.”¹⁴ The African

National Congress (ANC) was founded in 1912, birthed from Black opposition, and was organized to fight for the rights of Black South Africans. The ANC pioneered the struggle against White supremacy and the oppression of people of color in South Africa. On June 19, 1913, the Natives Land Act became law. Among its many restrictions, this act prohibited Black South Africans from owning land outside of a small area (estimated at approximately 7 percent of the country) that was allocated for their use. In 1948 the National Party (NP) won government election and enforced *Apartheid*, "an even more rigorous and authoritarian approach than the previous segregationist policies."¹⁵

The ANC remained at the forefront of vehemently opposing the national apartheid government. Some notable role players of the ANC include Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela (1918–2013), Oliver Tambo (1917–1993), and Walter Sisulu (1912–2003). Resistance came in the form of many protest actions. Some significant protests organized by the ANC included a mass meeting in 1952 when attendees burned their pass books and the events of Sharpeville in 1960 when a group of Black citizens arrived at the police station without their passes. This resulted in havoc and clashes between police officers and the group ending in multiple deaths and injuries.¹⁶

South Africa was declared a republic in 1961, and it enforced further residential segregation laws that saw many people of color removed from their homesteads. Nelson Mandela was incarcerated from 1963 until 1990. His imprisonment drew international attention, and many boycotts were launched against the apartheid regime of South Africa. In 1974 the United Nations General Assembly denounced *Apartheid* and instituted international economic sanctions on South Africa.¹⁷

A "sliding economy, increasing internal dissent and international pressure,"¹⁸ led to the South African government repealing its *Apartheid* laws, culminating with the release of Nelson Mandela from prison on February 11, 1990. The first democratic election took place on April 27, 1994, when all South African citizens had the right to vote. The ANC emerged victorious with a 62 percent majority vote, and the nation became the democratic Republic of South Africa. Since 1994 the ANC has been the ruling party.

Today South Africa is considered a predominantly Christian country. Christian holidays, including the Easter weekend and Christmas, are recognized in the country. An astounding 74 percent of the country's population are Christians, while other major religions include Traditional African Religion, Islam, Hinduism, or no religious affiliation.

The currency used in the country is the South African Rand (ZAR). The present exchange rate to the American US dollar is R17.55.¹⁹ Its key economic sectors are mining, transport, energy, manufacturing, tourism, and agriculture. Domestic travel in South Africa takes place via road, rail, and air facilities. Public transport include the Gautrain between Johannesburg and Pretoria, Metrorail throughout the Cape Metropolitan, bus transport systems in every major city, and minibus taxi services in every locality. Value-added tax on goods and services is levied at 15 percent. Following the Coronavirus outbreak, the country's economy contracted with the repo rate currently at 5.25 percent, inflation at 4.6 percent, and the GDP growth rate at -1.4 percent.²⁰

The government of South Africa is a constitutional multiparty democracy, which operates on three spheres—municipal, provincial, and national government. The national government is administered by the African National Congress (ANC) with Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa as the president of the country.²¹ South Africa has nine provinces and three national capital cities. The administrative capital resides in Pretoria, the legislative capital in Cape Town and the judicial capital in Bloemfontein. The constitutional court is located in Johannesburg.²²

Origins of Adventist Work in the Country

The first known Seventh-day Adventist believer to come to South Africa with the Advent message was William Hunt. Hunt was a gold miner in Gold Hill, Nevada, in the United States of America.²³ His keen interest in the Bible and its prophecies led him to John Loughborough in 1868. From Loughborough, Hunt bought literature on Seventh-day Adventist doctrines and Bible prophecy, including Uriah Smith's book on *Daniel and the Revelation*. Within one year Hunt bought every book published by Seventh-day Adventists, subscribed to the weekly *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, observed the seventh-day Sabbath, and was baptized by John Loughborough.

In 1871 diamonds were discovered in Kimberley, South Africa, and thousands of miners descended upon the Kimberley diamond fields because of the prospects that the diamond fields seemed to offer. Hunt was also attracted to the newly discovered diamond fields of South Africa. He made preparations to leave the United States and purchased a complete set of prophetic charts, along with other literature from John Loughborough to take with him. He also made arrangements for the *Review and Herald* and the *Signs of the Times* to be sent to him wherever he settled. Hunt arrived in Kimberley later in the same year and lived there until his death in 1897.

While working on the mine fields in Kimberley, William Hunt shared the Advent message with as many as he could through Bible studies and the literature that he had brought with him. That Hunt became an ardent Seventh-day Adventist missionary in Kimberley was attested by a letter received and printed in the *Review and Herald* in 1878. The letter was written by a former Methodist preacher named J. H. C. Wilson. In the letter Wilson stated that he, his wife, and four other persons decided to accept the Seventh-day Adventist faith after studying the literature they received from Hunt.²⁴ In the letter Wilson acknowledged that Seventh-day Adventists have the truth and expressed that there was a great work to be done among the wealth seekers on the diamond fields.

Pioneers of Seventh-day Adventism

In 1885 William Hunt became acquainted with George J. van Druten and Pieter Wessels, who became two of the most prominent converts to Adventism in South Africa. Van Druten and Wessels were both Afrikaners and attended the same Dutch Reformed Church congregation. By the time Van Druten met William Hunt, he already had an encounter with the seventh-day Sabbath truth. This encounter came through a dream and personal Bible study when Van Druten was traveling to Bloemfontein with his sick child seeking medical attention. As his

custom was, he refused to do any traveling on the Sunday, which he revered as a holy day. This angered his wife, and that particular night Van Druten had a dream in which a stranger pointed out that Saturday was the Sabbath and directed him to the Ten Commandments.²⁵

One Saturday afternoon Van Druten and his wife passed by William Hunt, who was sitting under a tree in his finest clothes reading the Bible. Van Druten told his wife that Hunt had been labeled as the “laziest man in town, since he kept two Sundays every week.”²⁶ Contrary to his remarks, Mrs. Van Druten insisted that Hunt looked like an old saint. Van Druten began to visit Hunt and learned about Bible prophecy and became convinced that Saturday is the Sabbath from the literature which Hunt shared.

Pieter Wessels was 29 years old when he discovered the truth about God’s Sabbath day. Wessels had been struggling with his health, and the medication prescribed by physicians was of no avail.²⁷ A sad turn of events worsened his illness when pulmonary inflammation, possibly picked up from working on his farm in the rain, threatened to end his life. Conscious of the fact that the medication he used proved to be of no apparent benefit, Wessels decided to put the promise of James 5:14, 15 to the test. Wessels continued to deteriorate during the night but was miraculously spared and strong enough the next morning to walk around the farm. Wessels had been a sincere student of the Bible, and the healing that he experienced made him even more studious.

Shortly after this, Wessels spoke to his brother, John, about how he had been healed because of prayer.²⁸ John discouraged Pieter from taking the Bible so literally, otherwise he would need to observe Saturday as the Sabbath. Wessels considered himself to be a faithful student of the Bible and already determined to show more reverence for Sundays by minimizing the labor done on those days. Along with his wife, Maria, Pieter Wessels searched the Scriptures and discovered that Saturday was indeed the biblical Sabbath day, and they began to observe it as such.

Wessels and Van Druten were already acquainted and upon sharing notes of their personal Bible studies one day learned that each observed the Sabbath. Until then Wessels thought that he was probably the only Christian in the world who observed the Sabbath day. Van Druten introduced Wessels to William Hunt without hesitation. It brought Wessels great delight to learn that there was an organized church who taught the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath.²⁹

Their thirst for more truth remained unquenched. William Hunt provided Wessels and van Druten with English literature, which they could not easily understand since they mainly understood Dutch. Hunt had compassion on them, and they wrote a letter to the General Conference requesting a Dutch minister to come to South Africa to baptize them by immersion and also instruct them in the teachings of Seventh-day Adventists. Along with this letter they included £50 to assist with the expenses of their noble request.³⁰

This time the plea for help to be sent to South Africa was not met with indifference such as the former made by J. H. C. Wilson. The letter was received and read at the 1886 General Conference Session in Battle Creek,

Michigan, with great delight and applause. Unfortunately, there was no Dutch minister available at the time, but a group of two ministers, Dores A. Robinson and Charles L. Boyd, along with their wives, two literature evangelists George Burleigh and Richard S. Anthony, and a Bible instructor, Corrie Mace, were sent to South Africa to pioneer the work of Seventh-day Adventists in Africa.³¹ On July 28, 1887, they arrived in Cape Town where Pieter Wessels met them and took them to his parents who lived on a farm in Wellington.

The missionaries stayed in Wellington with the Wessels family to strategize how they would conduct the work in South Africa. It was determined that the group would split; half of them would proceed with Pieter Wessels to Kimberley while the rest would remain behind to begin the work in Cape Town and its surrounding suburbs. C. L. Boyd and George Burleigh went to Beaconsfield, Kimberley, and the Robinsons together with R. S. Anthony and Corrie Mace moved to Cape Town to pioneer the work.³²

Upon arriving in Kimberley, Pastor Boyd held some meetings and began instructing those who desired to become Seventh-day Adventists. A company of 21 adults were already anticipating baptism when he arrived. It was in August 1887 at Beaconsfield where Elder Boyd baptized the first Seventh-day Adventist believers in South Africa and organized the first Seventh-day Adventist Church. This church was organized with 26 newly baptized souls and their children. The newly formed church first met in a school room. After three years of evangelism in the form of tent meetings, literature distribution, and house to house Bible studies, the Beaconsfield Seventh-day Adventist Church was purchased in May 1890 and became the first Seventh-day Adventist church building on the continent of Africa. The Beaconsfield Seventh-day Adventist Church remains a heritage site in South Africa today.

In Cape Town the work did not take off as smoothly as in Kimberley. There was "much prejudice to be broken down."³³ Cape Town's first exposure to the Adventist message came through canvassing. Eventually Pastor Robinson began giving lectures in churches on temperance and prophecy. He refrained from teaching peculiar Adventist beliefs until a tent arrived from America with which they could conduct public meetings. When the tent arrived, Pastor Boyd came to Cape Town to assist Pastor Robinson with the public meetings.

Within a matter of months, Pastor Robinson requested the General Conference to allow him to return to England and continue working with John Nevins Andrews. Ira J. Hankins was sent to South Africa to replace Pastor Robinson. Pastor Hankins and his family arrived in Cape Town on February 9, 1888.³⁴ He immediately continued the work that Robinson began by doing visits to interested persons and holding cottage meetings. Tent meetings were not held until much later that year in November when Pastor Hankins moved the tent to Mowbray and started to conduct meetings in the southern suburbs of Cape Town.

The second church in South Africa was organized on March 2, 1889, with sixteen members as a result of these meetings.³⁵ In April of the same year the South African branch of the International Tract and Missionary Society was organized. The International Tract and Missionary Society was the department of the church responsible for taking the work into all parts of the world through every means. This was the first formal organization in South

Africa and served as a point of literature sales and was used to conduct the business of the church in South Africa. A property along with a plot large enough to erect a church building, school, and printing press was secured by Roeland Street.³⁶ This became the first permanent location for the church in Cape Town and also became the first headquarters of the church in South Africa.

One whose efforts to strengthen the church in South Africa certainly cannot be overlooked is Asa T. Robinson, the brother of D. A. Robinson. A. T. Robinson's contribution is discussed further in this article, but he deserves being noted as a pioneer of Adventism in South Africa. A. T. Robinson arrived in South Africa in January 1892 to take over the general leadership when C. L. Boyd was recalled to America. When Mr. and Mrs. A. T. Robinson came to South Africa, they left their children in America with relatives to continue with Adventist education since there was not yet an Adventist school operating in South Africa. A. T. Robinson became a driving force to initiate Adventist education in South Africa in order to have his sons come and join them. They were separated for a total of twenty months until his sons joined them in South Africa in August of 1893.

A. T. Robinson was hailed for his "energetic and enterprising leadership."³⁷ Among his accomplishments for the continent of Africa are included the organizing of the first conference, the inauguration of the first Seventh-day Adventist tertiary college, the establishment of the first Seventh-day Adventist elementary school and a children's orphanage, the publication of the denominational newspaper in both English and Dutch, the printing of the first African vernacular language tracts, the building of the Adventist medical hospital, and spearheading the expansion of Adventism into the territory north from South Africa into Matabeleland.³⁸ A. T. Robinson displayed efficient leadership during his six-year tenure in South Africa and is honored as a prominent administrator and preacher to South Africa.

Spread and Development of the Adventist Message

When Wessels became acquainted with the Adventist message, he enthusiastically shared his newfound faith with all his family members including his parents who relocated to Wellington in the Cape during that time. One of his converts who is of special note was his brother-in-law, Gert J. G. Scholtz. When Scholtz heard that Pieter Wessels was now a Sabbath keeper, he determined to set him straight. Scholtz attempted to dissuade Pieter Wessels thrice, but he was left speechless each time with Wessels' biblical reasoning. Eventually he was convinced of the Sabbath truth, accepted it, and went about spreading the truth to all who listened.

Two prominent people he tried to convert were the presidents of the Orange Free State and the South African Republic. He first visited the president of the Orange Free State and then traveled across the Vaal River to convince the president of the South African Republic, President Paul Kruger, that Saturday was the Sabbath. The latter acknowledged the validity of his argument in favor of the Sabbath but maintained that his position as president would not allow him to keep the Sabbath.³⁹

David Fletcher Tarr played a crucial role in starting the church in the Eastern Cape. Tarr, a lay Methodist preacher, and Albert Davies were farmers from Grahamstown who met Pieter Wessels in Kimberley. When they engaged with Pieter Wessels, they learned that he kept Saturday as Sabbath. When Pieter Wessels convinced both of them that Saturday was the biblical Sabbath day, they returned home and shared their new convictions with their family members.

On December 24, 1889, S. N. Haskell, Hattie Hurd, and Mr. and Mrs. Druillard arrived to strengthen the work in South Africa.⁴⁰ Their arrival relieved Elder Hankins of his commitments to the work in Cape Town. He could now move on to the Eastern Cape where an interest had already been kindled by Tarr and Davies. From prior experience in both Kimberley and Cape Town, it was clear that public meetings in tents proved less effective than house to house meetings and literature work. Elder Haskell advised Elder Hankins to conduct house meetings instead of public efforts when he arrived in the Eastern Cape. Elder Hankins and Tarr cooperated, and in April of 1890 a Sabbath School was organized with 26 members, and soon the third Seventh-day Adventist Church in South Africa was organized from the Willmore, Tarr, Davies, Sparrow, and Staples families.⁴¹ This church had a membership of 18 and was formed at Rokeby Park.⁴²

Elder Boyd continued holding meetings along the Vaal River into Transvaal, which was then still an independent state known as the South African Republic. He started to familiarize himself during this time with the African people and their customs. It was his intention to begin working with the native African people. This never materialized since his and his wife's failing health brought about their permanent return to America in 1891.

It became abundantly clear, however, that colporteur work was the way forward in South Africa. At a general meeting held mid-June 1890, reports were heard of the progress of the work, that colporteurs had gone as far as Natal with their literature.⁴³ It was then arranged for Mr. E. M. and Mrs. Morrison to come to South Africa from Australia to offer training in literature salesmanship.

The desire to have the Advent message taken to the indigenous people of South Africa resurged in 1893 when Pieter and John Wessels as delegates from South Africa took a donation of £3,000 with them to the General Conference. It was their hope that a mission station be set up among the African people.⁴⁴ This request did not receive ample consideration from the General Conference, and the work among natives in South Africa began without any help sent from the General Conference.

A proud descendant from the Ama Xhosa chiefs by the name of Richard Moko, along with his wife, were the first Black South Africans to accept Adventism. He first heard the Advent message preached at meetings held in Kimberley in 1893 and was baptized in 1895.⁴⁵ He wrote the first isiXhosa tract to be circulated among his people and was granted ministerial credentials in 1897. He endured considerable hardships as a gospel worker, but a number of churches were planted as a result of his efforts.

In 1903 the South African Conference requested aid from the Foreign Mission Board to help establish a mission among the Xhosa people. Enough funds were sent to acquire a wagon that was used by Moko and his

missionary associate G. W. Shone throughout the Ciskei. Missionary activity among the Xhosa people increased in the following years, and in 1911 the Maranatha congregation was organized with 27 members.⁴⁶ From here the work spread northward into Kwazulu-Natal and the Transvaal resulting in another mission being formed known as the Delgoa Mission.

In 1915 Richard Moko became the first Black South African to be ordained as a Seventh-day Adventist minister. Moko and Shone traveled extensively across the country, but a large part of their ministry was based in East London. The highlight of their ministry included finding a location for establishing the Maranatha Mission in Grahamstown. This mission was established under the supervision of Pastor W. S. Hyatt, the president of the South African Conference at the time. F. B. Armitage took over the leadership of the mission in 1907 and relocated it to Bethel in 1909 and renamed it Bethel School. In 1919 the lease was taken over by Charles Sparrow in order to farm the land, and the Sparrow family carried on with the mission.

The first colored Seventh-day Adventist convert can also be traced back to the diamond fields of Kimberley. Daniel Christian Theunissen was a farm worker employed by the Wessels family. Young Theunissen apparently did not respond to Adventism when Pieter Wessels made Saturday a non-working day.⁴⁷ Theunissen relocated to Cape Town in 1892 and went to work for A. T. Robinson at his home. He became friends with Robinson's son, Dores Eugene Robinson, who taught him the fundamental teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He was baptized the following year in 1893 and "proved to be an effective church leader among his people for many years."⁴⁸

D. C. Theunissen first became a lay preacher and preached publicly on Sundays at the Salt River market close to Cape Town's city center. He reaped the fruit of his efforts as a small group of interested listeners emerged. They continued to meet on Sabbath days for worship in a nearby hall.⁴⁹ Theunissen was employed as a full-time evangelist in 1905 and ordained as a minister in 1910. The first church for colored Seventh-day Adventists in South Africa was built by York Street, Salt River, in 1918. The church is still in use until this very day.

Institutions of the Church

Almost as soon as organizing the first local conference in South Africa occurred, the need for an Adventist school in South Africa became apparent. "Four Seventh-day Adventist families were employing private tutors in their homes," and several children of the Wessels' and other families attended Battle Creek College in America.⁵⁰ When rich diamond deposits were discovered on the farm of Johannes Wessels, the De Beers mining company bought the farm from the Wessels' for £253,460. The Wessels family not only gave tithe and offerings from this income but donated large sums of money for setting up buildings for institutions and organization.

Helderberg College. When A. T. Robinson and his wife arrived in South Africa in 1892, they left their sons behind in the United States to continue with Adventist education. Land was purchased in 1892 from Ernest Ingle in Kenilworth,⁵¹ and the school building named Claremont Union College was completed by the beginning of 1893.

The Cape Times, dated January 4, 1893, advertised the first invitation to prospective students, and on February 1, 1893 classes commenced with 65 students, half of whom were non-Adventist students. The school started out with three teachers from America, namely Mr. H. Lindsay, Miss S. Peck, and Professor Eli B. Miller, who also served as the principal. The Claremont Union College was the first Adventist educational institution outside of North America and offered primary, secondary, and tertiary education.

Financial difficulty, coupled with the threat of urbanization, made it necessary to relocate the school after a number of years. The general consensus was that the sale of the building in Kenilworth would relieve the college of the heavy debt it had incurred. Housing developments in Kenilworth also impacted on the available land usage. A rural setting was necessary as the agricultural activities would help the students and the school financially. Physical work has been part of the Adventist educational philosophy since Ellen White first advocated it as part of the principles of holistic education in 1873.⁵² These were the factors that led to the decision to relocate the school from Kenilworth to a more rural setting.

A farm located some 32 kilometers from Ladysmith, Natal, acquired by F. B. Armitage and paid for by the members of the Natal-Transvaal Conference for the purpose of setting up a mission station for the work among the Zulu people was considered to be the best location for the school. The farm known as Spion Kop was secluded from any prospect of urban civilization. There was ample land for farming and grazing, and the Tugela River provided an abundant water supply for cattle and irrigation.⁵³ Buildings were erected from materials salvaged from the Claremont Union College, as well as monies raised by fundraisers in preparation for the big move. Classes commenced on February 19, 1919 with an enrolment of 27 students.

Spion Kop turned out to be not so ideal after all. Its remote location made getting to and from the college, and getting essential supplies, a considerable hardship. The following reasons, which made relocating again necessary, were cited: "students in ministerial training had no opportunity for experience in actual 'soul winning' work without going a long distance from the college ... difficulties in transport to Ladysmith; unsuitable soil for general farming ... too far from business market" and emergency medical aid.⁵⁴ After having surveyed more than 50 farms in the Western Cape, Mr. Berger's farm called Bakker's Kloof was purchased in Somerset West for £10,000 on November 7, 1925. The South African Union Conference contributed £5,000, £2,725 was made from selling some of the ground at Spion Kop, and the remainder came from selling the Cape Sanitarium and individual contributions.

By 1928 the college was moved from Spion Kop to the Bakker's Kloof farm. The location was ideal since it was out in the country yet close enough to civilization. The college adopted the name Helderberg College, named after the mountain behind the college. Helderberg College started with only two dormitory buildings in which were crammed not only rooms for student accommodation but a kitchen, dining hall, laundry, store rooms, chapel, library, laboratory, classrooms, and the business office. In 2018 the college celebrated its 125^h anniversary. The college was renamed Helderberg College of Higher Education, and the campus remains an

idyllic location and boasts of more than sixty buildings, including a church, administration building, auditorium, lecture buildings, a library, dormitories, flats and houses for married students, staff houses, cafeteria, gymnasium, swimming pool, orchards, and a primary school, as well as a high school.

Bethel College. In 1904 Richard Moko and his associate, G. W. Shone, established the Maranatha Mission. The Maranatha Mission served as the mission station and training school for Black students. In 1908 Charles Sparrow offered a portion of his large farm nearly 50 kilometers from Grahamstown for the purpose of establishing the Maranatha Mission Station. The new mission opened here in 1909, and 60 students enrolled.

By 1916 it was evident that it would be in the best interest of the African people if the Maranatha Mission relocated. The African population around the Maranatha Mission had declined. A plot near Butterworth seemed satisfactory, and in 1917 this plot was purchased. The Maranatha Mission was moved there and renamed Bethel.

When the White school moved from Spion Kop to Bakker's Kloof in Somerset West, church leaders felt that Spion Kop was suited for the Black school. In 1928 the Bethel School relocated to Spion Kop where its name was changed to South African Training College, only to return to Butterworth in 1937.

Bethel Training College continued in Butterworth until it was closed shortly after the reorganizing of the Southern and South African Union Conferences to form the Southern Africa Union Conference in 1991. The circumstances that led to the closing of Bethel Training College were mainly due to the financial strain placed upon the reorganized Southern Africa Union Conference, which then had to maintain two colleges.

In its final years Bethel Training College offered three diplomas that were registered with the state: a diploma in accounting, a diploma in business management, and a diploma in education. The diplomas in accounting and business management were not popular and did not attract many students. Most of the students were drawn by the diploma in education for the teaching profession. Historically, Colored and Black persons in South Africa were limited to teaching, nursing, and policing as professional careers. Many training colleges existed for the purpose of training persons of color as teachers. When the government of South Africa restructured the education system shortly after the end of Apartheid, most of the training colleges were absorbed by institutions of higher learning, although the government could not absorb them all. The only colleges of education allowed to continue were those transformed to train students in scarce skills such as accounting, science, and mathematics. As a result, Bethel Training College, along with many other educational institutions, closed.

Apart from the three diploma courses registered with the state, Bethel Training College offered a program in theology that prepared Black pastors to enter the ministry. A plan to affiliate the theology program offered at Bethel Training College with Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama, never materialized. While negotiations were underway, Oakwood was due for reaccreditation, and the theology program offered at Bethel Training College was discontinued. When Bethel Training College closed in 1991, students studying theology were transferred to Helderberg College to complete their studies,⁵⁵ but the primary and secondary schools were

retained and continue until this day.

Good Hope College. A special school for Colored learners was started in connection with Claremont Union College. While Miss Hellen Hyatt taught the White learners in the church school, her mother, Mrs. Hyatt, taught the Colored learners elsewhere on the same grounds.⁵⁶ The first attempt at organizing a school for Colored Adventists occurred in October 1912 when Pastor Daniel C. Theunissen and Pastor Daniel May worked in the Northern Suburbs of Cape Town.⁵⁷ They organized a small company that met in a rented hall in Parrow and established a school with Miss Isabel Petersen as the first teacher. The church school continued for a few years. The next attempt to cater for the educational needs of Colored Seventh-day Adventists was in 1929 at Salt River. Seventh-day Adventist churches, in spite of financial constraints, endeavored to open church schools. Such church schools for Colored Adventists existed in Salt River, Wynberg, Elsies River, and Kensington in Cape Town. Elsewhere, church schools were opened in Durban, Natal, and Kliptown, Transvaal, in the late 1940s. Most of these church schools continued operating for years with the exception of the Salt River Church School. The Salt River Church School was in operation from January 1929 until April 1930 when the Good Hope Training School opened. The Salt River Church School was a temporary arrangement until a suitable rural site could be found for the establishment of an educational institution for the Coloreds.⁵⁸

Good Hope Training School opened on May 1, 1930, on a plot purchased along Klipfontein Road. The farm was called "Riverside" since it was situated on the banks of the Elsies Kraal River.⁵⁹ The name "Good Hope" was chosen with a double meaning. It was named after the Cape of Good Hope and also expressed the sentiments of its members for future education.

When Good Hope Training School opened, its curriculum included primary school education, three grades of secondary school education, as well as a course in tertiary education. Manual work was incorporated into the curriculum in line with the Adventist philosophy of education. The first principal of the institution was Miss A. V. Sutherland, and her assistants were Mrs. E. Heubner and Miss M. Africa. Thirty-five students enrolled when the institution opened in 1930.

In 1956 Good Hope Training School upgraded to junior college level when matric replaced standard 9 (grade 11) as the prerequisite for training courses.⁶⁰ It was renamed Good Hope Training College. Around the same time Good Hope Training College was faced with the same threat that Claremont Union College faced while it was situated in Kenilworth, increasing development in its surrounding area. A farm named Vorentoe (meaning "Forward" in Afrikaans) was purchased in Kuils River, and the institution was transferred there at the end of 1962.

On January 1, 1963 the high school and college divisions of the institution were established on the new campus in Kuils River. The school became known as Good Hope College "in keeping with developments in the educational field."⁶¹ The primary school remained behind on the Riverside campus and was named Riverside Primary School. Presently the Riverside Primary School is still in operation and shares the Riverside campus with

the beautiful Riverside church, the Danie Theunissen Hall, the Cape Conference bookshop, and a couple of apartments.

Since 1972 plans were considered to integrate third year theology students from Good Hope College with Helderberg College in order to complete a full four-year Theology Diploma. Both Helderberg and Good Hope College were institutions of the South African Union Conference, and it made no logical nor practical sense to divide resources to operate two small colleges that were merely 22 kilometers apart. Complete integration was first realized in 1974 when fourth year theology students from Good Hope College attended Helderberg College for the first time. At the beginning of 1975, third year theology students from Good Hope College were allowed to attend Helderberg College. At the end of 1975, the Theology department at Good Hope College closed completely. By the end of 1976 all college classes ceased at Good Hope College, and Helderberg College became an integrated college institution for both White and Colored students.

When Good Hope College was established in Kuils River in 1963, a small primary school was also started in Kuils River. "On January 1, 1974, the Good Hope Primary School was established as a separate educational institution."⁶² Having lost its college status, the institution became Good Hope High School on January 1, 1981. Both the primary school and the high school remain in operation independently under the administration of the Cape Conference today. Good Hope High School changed its name recently to Good Hope Adventist High School.

Currently Helderberg College of Higher Education is the sole Seventh-day Adventist tertiary institution in South Africa. South Africa has 18 Seventh-day Adventist schools operating as accredited private schools but following the National Senior Certificate curriculum of the Department of Education of the Republic of South Africa.

Plumstead Orphanage. Another institution owned by Seventh-day Adventists in South Africa was an orphanage. Fred Reed, a pharmacist from Kimberley, became the driving force behind this establishment.⁶³ Reed, along with Maria Wessels, Pieter Wessels' mother, contributed liberally toward getting the orphanage erected. On March 8, 1985, the Plumstead Orphanage opened its doors. Unique features of the orphanage were that it followed a strict vegetarian diet, served two square meals a day, and followed a regular routine for schoolwork, exercise, and rest.⁶⁴

During August of 1897, the orphanage suffered a bad bout of publicity. A representative from the Cape Times visited the orphanage and wrote an article, emphasizing the peculiarities. What gained special interest, or rather indignation, from the public was the vegetarian diet; whereby the staff substituted a blend of almonds and peanuts as their main protein in place of meat and the practice of serving only two meals a day. The orphanage finally closed down at the end of 1900.⁶⁵

Claremont Sanitarium. A sanitarium was opened in Claremont on January 12, 1897.⁶⁶ Dr. R. S. Anthony and Dr. K. Lindsay were in charge of the sanitarium. Dr. R. S. Anthony came to South Africa for the first time in 1887 with the first missionary band sent from the General Conference. He later returned to America and attained his

medical qualification. The sanitarium was located along Belvedere Road between Claremont and Newlands. At first the sanitarium accommodated 40 patients at a time. The sanitarium always operated at maximum capacity and often had to turn patients away due to limited space. Extensions were added and opened on February 22, 1899, with some notable guests in attendance. Guests included Mr. J. J. Bissett, the mayor of Claremont; Colonel Stowe, who was the U. S. Consul-General in Cape Town; and Dr. G. G. Eyre, the editor of the South African Medical Journal.⁶⁷

Special features of the sanitarium included monthly lectures to the public on healthful living and hydrotherapy treatment for a range of diseases. The sanitarium took special care to provide healthful vegetarian meals to their patients. The “medical and health work made a fairly wide impact,” but the church lost control of the sanitarium in 1904.⁶⁸ The sanitarium building, which belonged to the Wessels family, burned down in 1905. The property where the sanitarium once stood remains desolate until this day.

The Cape Conference (formerly the South African Conference) attempted medical work for a second time and opened the Cape Sanitarium in the orphanage building that closed in 1900. Dr. G. Thomason arrived in 1904 to take charge of the work until 1911 when he was called to become the Secretary General of the Medical Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Dr. W. C. Dunscombe and Dr. H. J. Williams succeeded him until Dr. John Reith became the medical director in 1920.

The sanitarium continued with considerable difficulty during the 1920s. Efforts made by the African Division to revive the sanitarium were futile, and the sanitarium no longer attracted public support. The sanitarium could not be maintained by the small White membership of the church and closed its doors in 1925.⁶⁹ Efforts made to establish a sanitarium again were of no avail. The medical work never revived in South Africa again.

Southern Publishing Association. When the first missionaries arrived in South Africa, they brought literature along. Literature work paved the way for the Adventist message in South Africa. Almost as soon as the work was started, the need to have a printing press locally was realized. Pastor Dores A. Robinson requested help from the Review and Herald, and a small hand-printing press was sent in 1890.⁷⁰ The printing press was given the name South African Publishing Company and operated from the basement of the church along Roeland Street before it moved to Claremont Union College in 1896.

At first the press printed only announcements, sermons, and a monthly publication named *The South African Sentinel and Gospel Echo*, along with its Dutch counterpart, *De Wachter*. This monthly publication included theological discourses, articles on healthful living, religious freedom, Christian education, and a children’s column.⁷¹ Books were still being imported. Literature was also prepared in South Africa’s native languages. The first native translations of some of Ellen White’s writings, including the well-known *Steps to Christ*, first appeared in isiXhosa, Sesotho, and isiZulu.

The press mainly served the printing needs of the conference and the sanitarium until the South African Union Conference took control of it toward the end of 1903 and expanded it. When it launched into commercial

printing, the work became too much to be handled by the office of the South African Union Conference, and a separate publishing department was organized in 1916. This new organization became known as the Sentinel Publishing Company and occupied the building that previously belonged to the Claremont Union College, after it relocated to Spion Kop.

The publishing house continued along Rosemead Avenue for the greater part of the twentieth century, and in 1964 the name was changed to Sentinel Publishing Association (SPA). SPA published and printed the books for colporteurs, the Sabbath School mission quarterlies, Bible study guides, a magazine called *Signs of the Times*, the *South African Union Lantern*, and whatever mass printing needs the church had. Toward its final years, the SPA started doing commercial printing for the public.⁷²

Its name, however, became problematic. The Jehovah's Witnesses had a popular and trade-mark magazine known as the Sentinel. The Sentinel Publishing Association of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South Africa became associated with the Jehovah's Witnesses, therefore they found it necessary to change the name. They decided to keep its initials as SPA and changed the name to Southern Publishing Association in 1983.⁷³

Financial difficulty led them to sell their properties along Rosemead Avenue in 1991 and relocate to a smaller facility in Ottery, Cape Town. They hoped that the profits made from the sale of the property along Rosemead Avenue would compensate for their financial difficulties they experienced at the time. Unfortunately, the new facility was smaller than the one along Rosemead Avenue, and they consequently had to downgrade from four color printing machines to two color printing machines that would fit into the new buildings. This resulted in a decline in business, which led them to finally close their doors and relocate to Bloemfontein in 2001. In Bloemfontein they no longer operated as a publishing company but rather as a distribution center.⁷⁴ The Southern Publishing Association closed in 2010, but the distribution center continues to operate under the name Home Health Educational Services (HHES) for literature evangelists.

Church Administrative Units

Pastor Asa T. Robinson is recognized for his major contribution toward the organizational structure of the church, not only in South Africa but also worldwide. The first local conference in Africa was organized under his leadership. On December 4, 1892, a session was convened at the Claremont College building. The highlight of their agenda was to discuss whether the mission in South Africa was strong enough to be organized into a self-supporting conference. On December 5, 1892, it was voted to request the General Conference to upgrade the South African Mission with its five churches and 128 members into the South African Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The officers of the new conference were A. T. Robinson (president), I. J. Hankins (secretary), and Mrs. N. H. Druillard (treasurer). The members of the Executive Committee were the Conference president, Pieter Wessels, Philip Wessels, Eli B. Miller (who had just arrived in South Africa to be the principal of the Claremont College), and J. H. Tarr.⁷⁵

When the South African Conference was organized under Robinson's leadership, he implemented an alternative system of operation. The General Conference plans committee of 1889 proposed "the idea of substituting subject-area departments within the conference structure in place of the variety of Seventh-day Adventist associations and societies."⁷⁶ Formerly the church did not have departments in their administrative units. Societies and associations were responsible for the work of their area, and conferences had to organize local branches of these associations or societies. For example, the Sabbath School Association was responsible for the Sabbath School work. Today churches and administrative units have Sabbath School departments. Robinson was a member of the 1889 plans committee and introduced that plan in the South African Conference since he considered the conference too small to organize such associations and societies.

The departments proved to be a success in the South African Conference, and when A. T. Robinson was transferred to become president of the Victoria Conference in Australia, he implemented this departmental system there too. At first the departmental system was opposed by W. C. White and A. G. Daniells of the Australasian Union Conference, but it was later adopted by all the conferences of the Australasian Union Conference. In 1901 the General Conference not only reorganized the church's administrative structure by establishing union conferences after the model of the Australasian Union Conference but also integrated the departmental system, which was first tried in South Africa and Australia into all of its administrative units.

This reorganization consequently led to the organizing of the South African Union Conference in 1902. The South Africa Union Conference was comprised of the South African Conference, the Natal-Transvaal Mission Field, and the Rhodesian Mission Field. The Natal-Transvaal Mission Field was organized into a conference shortly thereafter, and the work of the Free State was shared between the South African and the Natal-Transvaal Conferences. The African Division was organized in October 1919 and coordinated the work in the territory from South Africa to Cameroon. When the African Division was organized, it took over the offices of the South African Union Conference in Claremont as its headquarters while the South African Union Conference relocated to Bloemfontein.

On September 7, 1930, the South African Union Conference took an action to separate churches along racial lines. The Cape Conference (formerly known as the South African Conference) approved the decision during the sitting of its Executive Committee two days later. The Cape Conference subsequently formed the Cape Field, which operated as a parallel organization administering the growing Colored work within the Union of South Africa. In the following years the "same situation existed in the Transvaal, Natal, and Orange Free State provinces--separate organizations for the different race groups."⁷⁷ The Natal-Transvaal Conference separated into two conferences in 1958 to form the Transvaal and the Orange-Natal Conferences. The Colored work in both territories was administered by the Cape Field, and the Black work was organized into mission fields--the South Bantu and the North Bantu Mission Fields. In 1959 the South African Union Conference organized the Cape Field into the Good Hope Conference.

The South African Union Conference reasoned that separating the church administrative units along racial lines would be favorable to God's work. In 1960 two groups were formed that worked separately but sat together when addressing specific issues. Group I managed the work of the Cape Conference, Orange-Natal Conference, Transvaal Conference, Good Hope Conference, and the Indian Field. Group II managed the work of the North Bantu, South Bantu, and South West African Missions. The North Bantu Mission field included the work in the territories of Basutoland (now Lesotho) and Swaziland (now Eswathini). This administrative separation led to the organization of two independent union conferences in 1965. Group I was the South African Union Conference, and Group II became known as Southern Union Conference.

In 1985 the General Conference gave a mandate to the South African and Southern Union Conferences to merge. This merger materialized later in 1991 to form the current Southern Africa Union Conference. In the years that followed, the local conferences were reorganized as well. The Kwazulu Natal-Free State Conference was organized in 1994 and became the first conference to cater for all races in its constituency. In 1997 the Good Hope and the Southern Conference (formerly known as the South Bantu Mission Field) merged to form the Southern Hope Conference. In 2006 the Cape Conference merged with the Southern Hope Conference to form the Cape Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The jurisdiction of the Cape Conference stretches over the largest territory in South Africa comprising the Northern, Western, and Eastern Cape provinces. The Trans-Orange Conference and the Transvaal Conference never merged and still exist as independent conferences serving the same territory. The Trans-Orange Conference administers the work in the Gauteng, North West, Mpumalanga, and Limpopo provinces, plus a few churches in the Northern Cape and Free State provinces. The Transvaal Conference (which changed its name to Northern Conference of South Africa in 2014), cover the Gauteng, North West, Mpumalanga, and Limpopo provinces.⁷⁸ Its name Northern Conference of South Africa (NCSA) was given specifically to differentiate it from other conferences in the union, such as the then Namibia Conference, which also had the same initials (NC).⁷⁹

Important Points in Membership

When the first church was organized in Beaconsfield, Kimberley, in 1887, the membership comprised 26 adults. When the South African Conference was organized in 1892, the church membership in South Africa had reached 128. When the South African Union Conference was organized in 1902, the church's membership stood at 351. It took the church twenty-five years since its inception to pass the 1,000 membership mark in 1912. From there onwards membership growth became more rapid. Within seven years the church reached 2,000 members in 1919, coinciding with the organization of the African Division.

Between 1945 and 1946, the South African church membership passed the 10,000 mark. Twenty years later, in 1966, when the Southern Union Conference was organized as a separate union conference to administer the work among the Black missions of South Africa, the combined membership of the South African Union

Conference was 20,118. The first record of the membership of the two separate union conferences appeared in the 1967 *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*. One year following their reorganization, the statistics show that the South African Union Conference had 10,770 members, while the Southern Union Conference had 9,691 members.

Membership in the Southern Union Conference continued to grow at a faster rate than the South African Union Conference. By the time the two entities were merged in 1991, the South African Union Conference had 21,768 members, while the Southern Union Conference had 40,720 members, bringing the combined membership to a total of 62,488. When the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division was organized in 2003, the Southern Africa Union Conference membership was well on its way to reaching 100,000, with its 93,343 members out of the total 70,072, belonging to the churches in South Africa.⁸⁰ This represents a 49 percent growth rate since the two union conferences were merged to form the Southern Africa Union Conference in 1991. Finally, in 2012, the membership of the South African Church surpassed 100,000 members.

In 2014 the church in South Africa experienced a growth spurt when 12,153 members were added to the church as a direct result of the "Mission to the Cities" programs. The missionary book of the year, *The Great Hope*, was translated into the vernacular languages of South Africa, and 1.1 million copies of this book was distributed widely in preparation for the 182 outreach campaigns conducted in 91 cities. The latest (in 2020) available statistics show that the South African church stands at 144,311 members strong.⁸¹

Effects of the Political Development on the Church

The rise of Seventh-day Adventism in South Africa coincided with the discovery of diamonds. Tensions between the Afrikaner Boers who governed the land and the British who possessed the investment capital necessary for mining led to one of the bloodiest wars fought in South Africa. The South African Civil War (the Anglo-Boer War 1899 to 1902) resulted in the loss of approximately 71,000 lives and also crippled the operations of the church in South Africa financially.

When Pieter Wessels' father died in 1892, his widow and children inherited his fortune. The Wessels family contributed largely, though not solely, to the financial prosperity of the church. When the South African Civil War erupted, the Wessels family's wealth became severely diminished due to real estate properties that lost market value. Their dissatisfaction with the Adventist missionary leaders from the United States of America caused them to decrease their financial contribution to the church. The following years presented great financial difficulty to the church and not until the African Division was organized in 1920, to take over the administration of the mission fields in South Africa, did the church become financially stable again.

In 1948 the National Party (NP) won the general elections and became the ruling government of South Africa. The NP's manifesto included apartheid laws. Prior to 1948, when segregation already existed in various forms, not all races had the franchise to vote in elections or stand for a seat in parliament. The land acts existed, which

confined Black, Colored, and Indian races to demarcated areas. Many of these laws were legislated during the years of apartheid between 1948 and 1990, which consequently brought about several years of political unrest in South Africa.

When the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South Africa seemed to follow the trajectory of segregation between racial groups, the conclusion made by some was that the church condoned *Apartheid*. But when the church started earlier in 1887, there were no racial segregation issues in the church. New converts simply joined the church closest to them. But in 1925 there were calls for racial separation in the churches. Minutes of a Cape Conference Executive Committee of June 28, 1925 record the objection of the Wynberg Seventh-day Adventist Church to separate its church members on racial grounds.⁸²

There was a strong call for separation, and as *Apartheid* ensued, the church became all the more racially separated. Its administration began to be conducted separately—conferences and union conferences administered the work of the same territory but catered for different races. Educational institutions, too, were established to provide for the needs of different races—Helderberg College for White students, Bethel Training College for Black Students, and Good Hope College for Colored Students. According to one scholar, all these “reflected the paternalism of South African Whites toward persons of color at the time.”⁸³

The South Africa’s political situation led to further isolation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South Africa from the divisions’ constituencies in Africa. Since 1952 the South African *Apartheid* ideology was condemned annually by the United Nations, and it was declared a crime against humanity in 1974. Earlier, in 1964, South Africa was banned from the International Olympic games and continued to be excluded until it rejoined in 1992 when the ban was lifted. Other sanctions and boycotts were imposed against South Africa such as the British Commonwealth leaders’ agreement in 1986 to impose economic sanctions against South Africa. These sanctions included, but were not limited to, “a ban on both air travel and investments in South Africa, as well as a ban on agricultural imports and the promotion of South African tourism.”⁸⁴

In 1979 church meetings were held in Africa to consider reorganizing the work into two major divisions, but excluding the two union conferences in South Africa. At the time, the South African and Southern Union Conferences were part of the Trans-Africa Division, which opposed the planned reorganizing hoping to avoid the impression that the world church was aligning itself with the countries and international organizations which were distancing themselves from South Africa. Nevertheless, the proposed reorganization followed through, and in 1983 the two union conferences in the South were separated from the African divisions and became attached fields of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

In 1985 the General Conference mandated the two union conferences in South Africa to merge into one organization. Deliberations followed and experienced heated discussions at a joint session at Helderberg College in 1991. However, the two union conferences successfully merged to form the Southern Africa Union Conference. The merger happened to coincide with the fall of *Apartheid*. South African President F. W. De Klerk

lifted the ban on all opposition political parties, released Nelson Mandela from prison in 1990, and repealed the last of the *Apartheid* laws in 1991. The newly organized Southern Africa Union Conference, however, remained an attached field of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists until 2003 when the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division was organized, and the Southern Africa Union Conference was absorbed into it.

The residual effects of *Apartheid* are still felt in South Africa. It is, however, common to find mixed race church congregations in the urban areas of South Africa. Churches in rural areas remain racially separated, probably not because of racism but because of long lasting tradition and practical purposes such as the language used for worship.

Adventism's Place in the Country's History

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in South Africa has one tertiary educational institution, Helderberg College of Higher Education (HCHE). HCHE is located along 27 Annandale Drive, Helena Heights, in Somerset West.

"Helderberg College of Higher Education is registered with the South African Department of Higher Education and Training as a Private Higher Education Institution. All programs are accredited by the Council on Higher Education (CHE). All qualifications are registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) as found on the Web site of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).⁸⁵ The college is also accredited by the Adventist Accrediting Association (AAA) of Seventh-day Adventist Schools, Colleges, and Universities. The academic year is made up of two semesters: the first semester runs from January to June, while the second semester runs from July to December. HCHE offers seven degree programs and one higher certificate. These programs are run by three faculties: the Faculty of Business, the Faculty of Social Science and Education, and the Faculty of Theology.

There are four Adventist high schools in South Africa and fourteen primary schools. All the schools are accredited with UMALUSI, the accrediting body of the Department of Basic Education in South Africa and follow the National Senior Certificate (NSC) curriculum.⁸⁶ All schools are also accredited by the AAA. The general trend in all the schools is that the number of non-Adventist learners outnumber the Adventist learners. Baptisms are conducted annually for new believers at the schools.

A private psychiatric hospital known as Vista Clinic provides mental health services for persons aged 16 years and older. An initiative of Dr. Jappie Vermaak, the hospital is partially owned by the Adventist Professional Health and Humanitarian Services (APHHS). "The most frequent conditions treated are mood and anxiety disorders such as depression, bipolar disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorders."⁸⁷ Vista Clinic is one of the largest private psychiatric hospitals in South Africa. It can admit 158 patients while catering for the needs of day patients, as well.

The Adventist Community Services (ACS) in South Africa has established an organization known as Meals on Wheels Community Services South Africa (MOWCS). MOWCS is an initiative of Dr. Dennis Baird and is entirely

owned by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South Africa. MOWCS provides nourishing meals to the struggling elderly persons and operates kitchens throughout South Africa. MOWCS provides 31 million meals annually at 187 branches and 700 service points countrywide. MOWCS has more than two hundred eighty vehicles and more than one thousand four hundred volunteer helpers who are involved at their own expense in delivering nutritious meals to the less fortunate. Additionally, MOWCS provides more than one hundred twenty thousand Christmas meals and hampers.⁸⁸

Since its inception in 1962, MOWCS has established frail care centers and retirement villages. These centers and retirement villages were established to provide frail care and full board and lodging, which are subsidized for the aged persons who cannot afford to pay the full amount or pay at all, for that matter.⁸⁹ A total of 18 frail care centers are operational in South Africa with nine in Gauteng, six in Kwazulu-Natal, two in North West, and one in the Western Cape Provinces.

Another humanitarian organization in the country is the Adventist Development Relief Agency South Africa (ADRA SA). ADRA is a global humanitarian organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that delivers relief and development assistance to communities and individuals. "ADRA SA works with people in poverty and distress to create just and positive change through empowering partnership and responsible action."⁹⁰ Some of ADRA SA's programs include "mitigating drought relief and providing health screening," providing temporary shelter for displaced persons from informal settlements following natural disasters and disaster relief, and erecting crop-shelter for the vegetables grown in the communities "to reduce water evaporation and improve soil mulch in an attempt to mitigate the negative impact of El-Nino drought conditions." ADRA SA also partners with both the National and Free State Provincial Department of Social Development to assist more than seven thousand households with food and nutrition access on a daily basis. ADRA SA also coordinates a training program for HIV/AIDS prevention, which is of special note since South Africa has one of the highest HIV prevalence rates in the world.

South Africa has recently been in the spotlight for gender-based violence. The General Conference Department of Women's Ministries launched campaigns against the abuse of women and children. These campaigns are run under the slogan "enditnow-Adventists Say No to Violence." The fourth Sabbath in August has been designated as Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day on the worldwide church calendar. In support of the Adventist Church's Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day, thousands of church members in South Africa took a stand against the abuse of women and children abuse on August 26, 2017. Church members joined hands with law enforcement officers to denounce violence against women and children. Public meetings and marches were held throughout major cities in South Africa to affirm that Adventists do not condone violence against women and children. Since that historic day, it has become an annual event for the Adventist Women's Ministry Departments to participate in the fight against gender-based violence.

Challenges to Mission and What Remains to be Done

Considering that the Adventist work on the continent of Africa started in South Africa and spread northwards, it is of great concern that South Africa has one of the smallest membership statistics in the division territory.

South Africa's church membership is 145,268. With a national population of approximately 58,780,000, South Africa has the highest member-to-non-member ratio of 1:405 in the SID.

This reality has also impacted the administrative units in South Africa. South Africa is the second largest country in SID, followed by Angola, and South Africa has only one union conference. The Southern Africa Union Conference covers the largest territory and includes the Republic of South Africa, the Kingdom of Lesotho, the Kingdom of Eswatini, and the Republic of Namibia. The local conferences in South Africa also cover large territories. For instance, the Cape Conference of Seventh-day Adventists covers the Northern, Western, and Eastern Cape provinces of South Africa, three of the country's largest provinces with a combined territorial area of 671,317 square kilometers. This makes the Cape Conference one of the largest conferences in terms of land mass in the world, yet it has a significantly small membership compared to many conferences with smaller areas. Church officers often need to travel great distances to get from one part of the conference or union conference to another.

South Africa has earned the label of "Rainbow Nation" as a testimony to its diversity. South Africa recognizes eleven official languages. As a result, the church has the challenge of presenting the Advent message using a diversity of methods, as one standard approach would hardly do justice to the national diversity.

The Adventist church in South Africa is also spreading its message in a religiously diverse context. Colonialists brought and introduced their own religious practices into South Africa. While these were mainly Christian denominations, British colonialists who occupied the Natal coastline also brought many indentured laborers from India to work the sugar cane fields of Natal. These laborers and other immigrants also brought their religious practices with them. South Africa therefore has a large variety of non-Christian religions, such as the African Traditional Religion, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, and Buddhists. Not only does the Adventist Church in South Africa compete against differing religions, but many Black South Africans retain their cultural practices and traditions upon conversion to Christianity. The church has to combat with many of these traditional practices that are not in harmony with the teachings of the Bible. Some of these practices include polygamy, which is culturally acceptable to some, and beliefs in divination and in ancestors as mediators between man and God.

South Africa's *Apartheid* history had far reaching effects that are still felt today and for years to come. The injustices done to persons of color by the *Apartheid* regime are still reported to still be far from being resolved, and the ongoing demands for restitution certainly present an obstacle in the church's work of spreading the everlasting gospel.

Not only are racial practices still rampant in the country in many ways, but tribalism is believed to still exist amongst many of the Black African cultures in South Africa. It therefore remains a great challenge for the church in South Africa to thrive under such circumstances. Xenophobic behavior has also been displayed in South Africa. Recent xenophobic attacks on foreign nationals put South Africa in a negative spotlight internationally. The church in South Africa is therefore presented with multiple challenges of effectively providing a house of prayer and a refugee shelter for all nations (Isaiah 56:7), as well as demonstrating national patriotism.

Lastly, South Africa is considered the eight most developed country in Africa.⁹¹ Its economic growth rate has attracted many foreign nationals from all over Africa and parts of Asia. The constant influx of foreign nationals is perceived to place a strain on South Africa's market, which has led to the agitation displayed by South Africans toward foreign nationals. Along with South Africa's economic development comes the threat of increasing secularization. As a result, the church in South Africa is losing more and more young people due to the influence of secularization. The onus rests upon the church to be innovative enough in order to rejuvenate its outreach methods while remaining doctrinally sound.

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