

Middle East and North Africa Union Mission

HOMER TRECARTIN, AND RICK MCEDWARD

Homer Trecartin, M.A. (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan), is the director of Global Mission Centers for the General Conference. Previously, he served as secretary/treasurer of Middle East Union.

Rick McEdward, D.I.S. (Intercultural Studies, Fuller Graduate Schools, Pasadena, California) is a pastor, church planter, and missionary. He spent 11 years pastoring and church planting in the Washington Conference, North American Division. In 2001 he and his wife Marcia moved their family to Colombo, Sri Lanka where they served for four years as missionaries. From 2005-2009 he served as director of Adventist Mission at the Southern Asia-Pacific Division in the Philippines. He later became associate director of the Institute of World Mission prior to his appointment as director of the Global Mission Centers at the General Conference, where he worked for 5 years. In 2016 he and his wife moved to Beirut, Lebanon to take up responsibility as president of the Middle East and North Africa Union. Rick and Marcia have two children.



Middle East and North Africa Union Headquarters, Beirut, Lebanon
(2007-)

Photo courtesy of Homer Trecartin.

The Middle East and North Africa Union Mission is attached to the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A. Formerly known as the Greater Middle East Union Mission, the Middle East and North Africa Union Mission was organized in 2012, renamed in October 2012, and reorganized in 2015. It occupies the following territories: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Western Sahara (Western Sahara is a contested area not universally recognized as a separate country or region), Yemen, and the northern half of Cyprus; comprising the Egypt-Sudan, Gulf, and West Asia Fields; and the East Mediterranean, and North Africa Regions.¹

As of June 30, 2018, the Middle East and North Africa Union Mission had 53 churches, membership of 4,096, and total population of 558,116,000.² The Middle East and North Africa Union Mission is located in Beirut, Lebanon.³

Organizational History

On August 24, 2010, less than two months after the 2010 General Conference Session, the General Conference Administrative Committee (ADCOM-S) voted to create a Middle East Survey Commission. Its assignment was to “study the work of the Church in the greater Middle Eastern area of the 10/40 Window and bring back a report to the 2011 Spring Meeting of the General Conference Executive Committee.” The commission was to be made up of Mike Ryan (chair), Homer Trecartin (secretary), Agustin Galicia, Robert Lemon, Geoffrey Mbwana, Benjamin Schoun, and Artur Stele. The presidents of the Trans-European Division (TED) and Euro-Africa Division (EUD) (Bertil Wiklander and Bruno Vertallier respectively) were listed as advisors.⁴

The first meeting of the Middle East Survey Commission, later renamed the Greater Middle East and Mediterranean Survey Commission (GMEMSC), was on September 20, 2010, at the General Conference office in Silver Spring, Maryland, USA. The two division presidents attended the meeting by phone. The focus of that first meeting was to make a list of information that should be collected to help the commission members understand the work that was going on in the region and the needs for the future. From there, they would be better able to grapple with how best to meet those needs.⁵

On January 25 and 26, 2011, the GMEMSC met for two full days. There was much prayer, looking at maps, and discussion as to the relevance and meaning of various facts and figures. A significant amount of time was devoted to carefully reviewing a paper David Trim had prepared entitled “the approximately 120-year history of Seventh-day Adventist Mission in the Middle East.” “Adventist origins in each country in the region,” analyzed “trends in denominational accessions and membership, employment, tithes and offerings, and education,”⁶ and offered an “analysis of the impact on mission of changes in denominational organization and structure”⁷ in the Middle East region through the years.⁸

The members of the GMEMSC met again in Istanbul, Turkey, and later in Ras al Khaimah, United Arab Emirates, to meet and interview members and those working with the organizations represented to see who would be retained if a new union would be formed.

The GMEMSC met again in June. Then, on July 12, after a careful review of the collected materials and much discussion, they voted to recommend to the GC ADCOM that the territory be reorganized into an attached union to the General Conference.⁹

Later that day, July 12, 2011, the GC ADCOM voted the recommendation which had come from the GMEMSC:

GREATER MIDDLE EAST AND MEDITERRANEAN SURVEY COMMISSION (ADCOM-A)—RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDED, 1. To reorganize the Middle-East-related mission territories of the Trans European Division and the Euro-Africa Division as an attached union to the General Conference. Other alignments of mission territories in the Trans-European Division and Euro-Africa Division will be recommended by September 20, 2011.

2. To task the Greater Middle East and Mediterranean Survey Commission with developing specific recommendations on the following and bringing a report to the General Conference Administrative Committee (ADCOM-S) no later than the September 20, 2011, General Conference Administrative Committee meeting during Prime Time:

- a. Organizational structure
- b. Headquarters location
- c. Leadership
- d. Resources such as operating budget, appropriations, allocated funds, and interdivision employee budgets (present and projected)
- e. General Conference administrative advisory team.¹⁰

The assignment was a big one—especially considering that everything had to be in place and ready to move forward if Annual Council were to vote to go ahead. But it was also understood that if the vote was not to move ahead, then none of these documents and lists would be used. On August 9, 2011, the GMEMSC met to review the preliminary work being done and set direction for a proposal that would be presented to ADCOM and possibly later to the Annual Council Executive Committee. They also worked on an operating policy for the new union mission¹¹ since union missions have an operating policy given them from the next higher organization instead of a constitution and bylaws.¹²

Between August 11 and 14, 2011, the GMEMSC chair (Mike Ryan) and secretary (Homer Trecartin), traveled to the Middle East Union and Trans-Mediterranean Territories interviewing and sharing the plans of the reorganization with employees and pastors in both regions as well as with the Middle East Union president, Kjell Aune.¹³

Much work was done over the next month and on September 28, 2011, a proposal was reviewed by the Presidential, Secretariat, and Treasury Councils (made up of GC and division officers) that each meet for a day just before Annual Councils and Spring Meetings at the GC. From there it went to a joint meeting of the General Conference and Division Officers (GCDO).¹⁴

Finally, on October 9, 2011, the full General Conference Annual Council Executive Committee, listened to a reading of the proposal, discussed it, and voted overwhelmingly to create the Greater Middle East Union Mission (GMEU) from parts of TED and EUD and attach it directly to the GC.¹⁵

As part of that action, an oversight committee was created at the General Conference. It was called the Greater Middle East Union Oversight Committee (GMEUOC) and was given the power to act in the place of a division

executive committee. Chaired by Michael Ryan, it included members of the GC Officers, Union Officers, and departmental representation.¹⁶

On October 10, 2011, after receiving a recommendation from the Nominating Committee, the Annual Council voted to elect Pastor Homer Trecartin as the president and Pastor Tibor Szilvasi as secretary of the new Greater Middle East Union Mission.^{17 18} Trecartin, who was then serving as the General Conference undersecretary, had previously served as the secretary-treasurer of the Middle East Union when its headquarters was in Cyprus. Szilvasi was currently the secretary of the Middle East Union.¹⁹

The new GMEUOC met all afternoon on October 12, 2011. During this meeting they approved an operating policy for the new union and began filling some of the necessary staffing positions.²⁰

On Thursday, December 29, 2011, Trecartin and his wife, Barbara, landed in Beirut, Lebanon in order to be ready for the start of the new union three days later.²¹

The first executive committee meeting of the newly formed Greater Middle East Union Mission was called to order on January 22, 2012, at the union office in Beirut, Lebanon. There were 12 members and six invitees present.²² During the three days of meetings, reports were given from the various parts of the union and many plans and policies were discussed and voted.

Later a name change from Greater Middle East Union (GMEU) to the Middle East and North Africa Union (MENA) was requested to be more inclusive of North Africa and to avoid political nuances in the former name. This recommendation was voted by the GC Annual Council on October 15, 2012,²³ and the General Conference Session took the following action on July 2, 2015:

115-15GS MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA UNION MISSION— NEW UNION MISSION

VOTED, 1. To recognize and record the organization of the Middle East and North Africa Union Mission, effective October 9, 2011.

2. To accept the Middle East and North Africa Union Mission (GC) into the world sisterhood of unions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.²⁴

This new union had a massive territory and population. With a starting population of 491,645,000²⁵ it was bigger than all but three of the 13 divisions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Those which were larger were the Northern Asia-Pacific Division,²⁶ Southern Asia Division,²⁷ and Southern Asia-Pacific Division.²⁸

After the reorganization of the union in 2012, work began to restructure the mission in the Middle East and North Africa territories. The need for additional personnel and creativity in supporting the peoples of the region became a major theme of the newly formed team.²⁹

The vision for additional workers was shared broadly. As a result, several other entities began partnerships with MENA Union to supply workers to cover the vast areas of the region. In addition to the existing support from the

General Conference, many entities responded to the call to bring families to the region, including the South American Division and Northern Asia-Pacific Division. Responding as well were some supporting ministries. MENA invited people to volunteer, working closely with the church but independent of it for financial support.³⁰

With a General Conference initiative to reach the largest cities of the world, the MENA administrative team focused heavily on creating new opportunities to mingle with people in the largest cities. At the time of reorganization of the union there were 51 cities of one million or more in the MENA territories. From this number, 26 had not been entered or had a group worshipping.³¹ By 2019 the number of large cities unentered had been reduced to 13.³² One strategy was to provide opportunities for people to mingle in the community through Urban Centers of Influence, a general term for the development of community centers in the region.

With the partnership of General Conference Adventist Mission (GCAMR) several training programs for frontline and administrative workers were conducted between the years of 2013 to 2019 in order to provide tools to better understand the indigenous people of the region and how to reach them.

In 2019 the MENA Media Center was renamed MENA Media Ministries and reorganized under the leadership of Chammin Chung to include Internet and Social Media as components of media outreach and a focus to strengthen work in the languages of the region including Arabic, Turkish, Farsi, Kurdish, and Kabyle.³³

Membership at the reorganization was 3,123³⁴ and as of the second quarter of 2019 is now 4,904, with 58 churches, 18 companies,³⁵ and 24 ordained pastors.³⁶

Executive Officers Chronology

Presidents: Homer Trecartin (2012³⁷-2016³⁸); Rick McEdward (2016³⁹-present).

Secretaries: Tibor Szilvasi (2012⁴⁰-present).

Treasurers: Donovan Cleary (2012⁴¹-2015⁴²); Michael Collins (acting, 2015⁴³); Michael Wixwat (2016⁴⁴-present).

Address

45 Ferdous St. Sabtieh, Jdeidet El Metn

P.O. Box 90-2026, Jdeidet El Metn, Metn 12022040, Lebanon

SOURCES

General Conference Administrative Committee minutes, August 24, 2010. ADCOM 10-219. General Conference Secretariat, Policy and Projects Manager/Recording Secretary, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

General Conference Administrative Committee minutes, July 12, 2011. ADCOM 11-195. General Conference Secretariat, Policy and Projects Manager/Recording Secretary, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

General Conference Administrative Committee minutes, November 2, 2010. ADCOM 10-461. General Conference Secretariat, Policy and Projects Manager/Recording Secretary, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

General Conference Annual Council Executive Committee minutes, October 9, 2011, GCC 11-90. General Conference Secretariat, Policy and Projects Manager/Recording Secretary, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

General Conference Annual Council Executive Committee minutes, October 10, 2011. GCC 11-132. General Conference Secretariat, Policy and Projects Manager/Recording Secretary, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

General Conference Annual Council Executive Committee minutes, October 10, 2011. GCC 11-136. General Conference Secretariat, Policy and Projects Manager/Recording Secretary, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

General Conference Annual Council Executive Committee minutes, October 15, 2012. GCC 12-119. General Conference Secretariat, Policy and Projects Manager/Recording Secretary, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

General Conference Middle East and North Africa Union Oversight Committee, April 6, 2016. 1. General Conference Secretariat, Associate Secretary, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

General Conference Middle East and North Africa Union Oversight Committee, October 7, 2015. 2. General Conference Secretariat, Associate Secretary, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

General Conference Session minutes, July 2, 2015. GCC 15-1014. General Conference Secretariat, Policy and Projects Manager/Recording Secretary, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

General Conference Working Policy 2011-2012. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2011.

Greater Middle East Union Executive Committee Minutes of the Year End Meetings, January 22, 2012. Middle East and North Africa Union Secretariat, Executive Secretary, Beirut, Lebanon.

Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2012.

Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2016 and 2019.

Trim, David. "Seventh-day Adventist Mission in the Middle East." Paper commissioned by the General Conference Secretariat for use by the Greater Middle East and Mediterranean Survey Commission, 2011.

NOTES

1. "Middle East and North Africa Union Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2019), 417.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. General Conference Administrative Committee, August 24, 2010, ADCOM 10-219. General Conference Secretariat, Policy and Projects Manager/Recording Secretary, General Conference Secretariat records, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.
5. Homer Trecartin, personal knowledge from working at the General Conference from 2005-2011 and being part of this Middle East Survey Commission.
6. David Trim, "Seventh-day Adventist Mission in the Middle East" (Paper commissioned by the General Conference Secretariat for use by the Greater Middle East and Mediterranean Survey Commission, 2011), 2.
7. Ibid., 3.
8. Homer Trecartin, personal knowledge from working at the General Conference from 2005-2011 and being part of this Middle East Survey Commission.
9. Ibid.
10. General Conference Administrative Committee, July 12, 2011, ADCOM 11-195. General Conference Secretariat, Policy and Projects Manager/Recording Secretary, General Conference Secretariat records, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.
11. Homer Trecartin, personal knowledge from working at the General Conference from 2005-2011 and being part of this Middle East Survey Commission.
12. "B 65 20 Organizing New Union Missions," *General Conference Working Policy 2011-2012* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2011), 78.
13. Homer Trecartin, personal knowledge from working at the General Conference from 2005-2011 and being part of this process.
14. Ibid.
15. General Conference Annual Council Executive Committee, October 9, 2011, GCC 11-90. General Conference Secretariat, Policy and Projects Manager/Recording Secretary, General Conference Secretariat records, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.
16. Ibid.
17. General Conference Annual Council Executive Committee, October 10, 2011, GCC 11-132. General Conference Secretariat, Policy and Projects Manager/Recording Secretary, General Conference Secretariat records, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring,

Maryland, U.S.A.

18. General Conference Annual Council Executive Committee, October 10, 2011, GCC 11-136. General Conference Secretariat, Policy and Projects Manager/Recording Secretary.
19. Homer Trecartin, personal knowledge from working at the General Conference from 2005-2011 and being part of this process.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Greater Middle East Union Executive Committee Minutes of the Year End Meetings, January 22, 2012, 1. Middle East and North Africa Union Secretariat, Executive Secretary, Middle East and North Africa Union Mission records, Beirut, Lebanon.
23. General Conference Annual Council Executive Committee, October 15, 2012, GCC 12-119. General Conference Secretariat, Policy and Projects Manager/Recording Secretary, General Conference Secretariat records, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.
24. General Conference Session, July 2, 2015, GCC 15-1014. General Conference Secretariat, Policy and Projects Manager/Recording Secretary, General Conference Secretariat records, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.
25. "Greater Middle East Union Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2012), 491.
26. "Northern Asia-Pacific Division," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (2012), 253.
27. "Southern Asia Division," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (2012), 375.
28. "Southern Asia-Pacific Division," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (2012), 399.
29. Rick McEdward, personal knowledge from working in the Middle East and North Africa Union from 2016 to present.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. President's Report presented by Rick McEdward, Middle East North Africa Union Executive Committee, May 23, 2019, MENA 19-005. Middle East North Africa Secretariat/Recording Secretary, Middle East and North Africa Union Mission records, Beirut, Lebanon.
33. Middle East North Africa Union Executive Committee, May 23, 2019, MENA 19-011. Middle East North Africa Secretariat/Recording Secretary, Middle East and North Africa Union Mission records, Beirut, Lebanon.

34. Greater Middle East Union Mission Membership Report First Quarter 2012, Secretary's Statistical Report, Middle East and North Africa Union Mission records, Beirut, Lebanon.
35. Secretary's Statistical Report by Country-First Quarter 2019, Middle East and North Africa Union Mission records, Beirut, Lebanon.
36. Secretary's Statistical Report – *Annual Statistical Report 2020*, Middle East and North Africa Union Mission, page 5, Middle East and North Africa Union Mission records, Beirut, Lebanon.
37. General Conference Annual Council Executive Committee, October 10, 2011, GCC 11-132. General Conference Secretariat, Policy and Projects Manager/Recording Secretary.
38. General Conference Middle East and North Africa Union Oversight Committee, April 6, 2016, 1. General Conference Secretariat, Associate Secretary.
39. "Middle East and North Africa Union Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2016), 501.
40. General Conference Annual Council Executive Committee, October 10, 2011, GCC 11-136. General Conference Secretariat, Policy and Projects Manager/Recording Secretary.
41. "Greater Middle East Union Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (2012), 491.
42. General Conference Middle East and North Africa Union Oversight Committee, October 7, 2015, 2. General Conference Secretariat, Associate Secretary.
43. General Conference Middle East and North Africa Union Oversight Committee, October 7, 2015, 2. General Conference Secretariat, Associate Secretary.
44. "Middle East and North Africa Union Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Church Yearbook* (2016), 501.

encyclopedia.adventist.org is an official website of the [Seventh-day Adventist World Church](#)

© 2020 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 12501 Old Columbia Pike Silver Spring , MD 20904 USA 301-680-6000