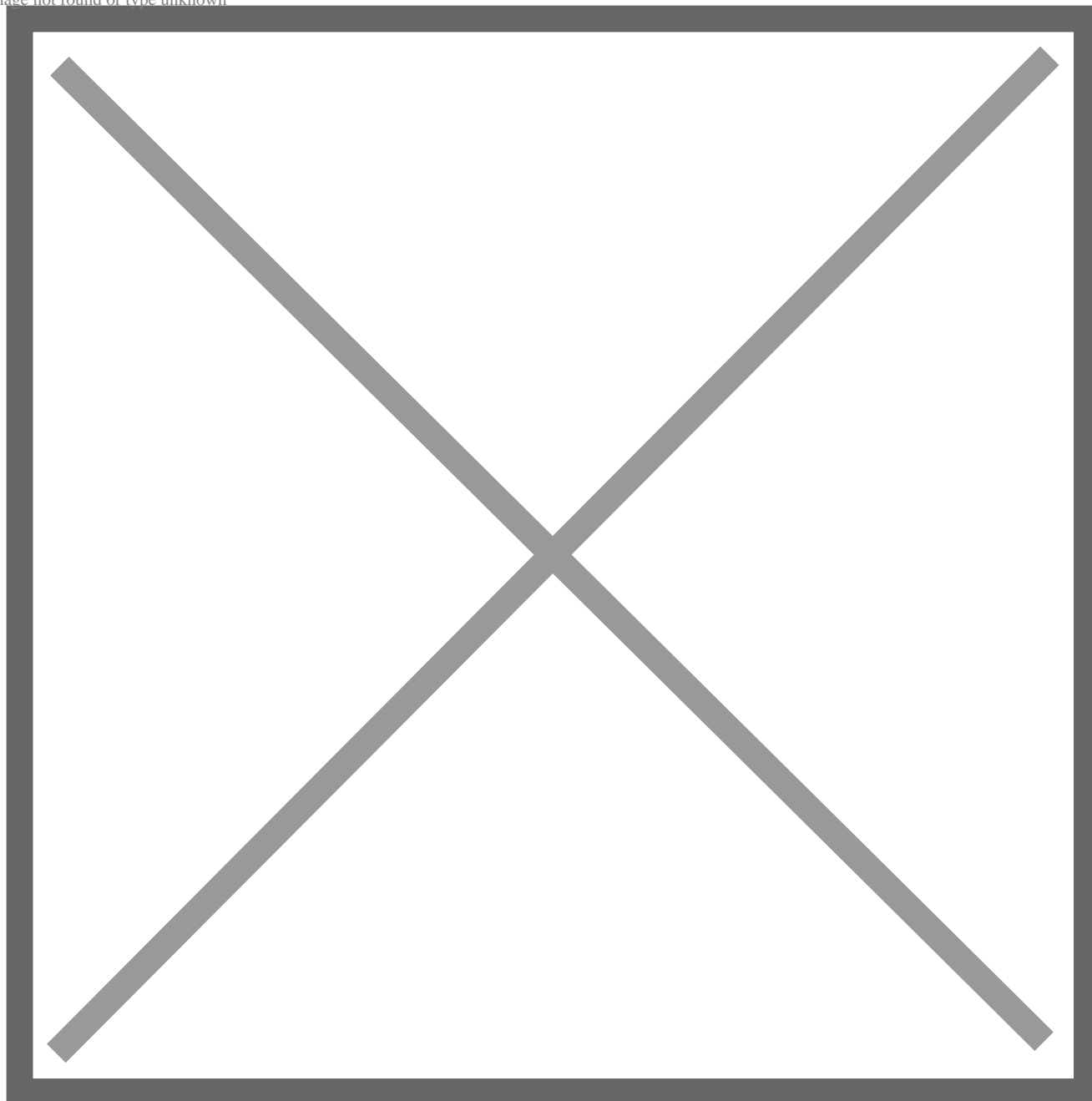


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West El Salvador Conference

JUAN CARLOS DURÁN

Juan Carlos Durán, M.A. (the University of Montemorelos), is the current executive secretary of the West El Salvador Conference and director of the Spirit of Prophecy of the El Salvador Union. He has served the Church for 30 years. He and his his wife Arles have two children.

Continued growth in the El Salvador Union Mission led to the creation of the West El Salvador Conference in 2006.

Current Territory and Statistics

The West El Salvador Conference covers the areas of Ahuachapán, Santa Ana, and Sonsonate in the Republic of El Salvador. Its headquarters is located at Boulevard los 44, next to the Tolteka Hotel, in Santa Ana.¹ This area of the country has a population of 1,055,516. In 2019, the West El Salvador Conference had a membership of 44,153 in 194 churches and 30 groups.²

Origins of the Adventist Church in the Territory of the West El Salvador Conference

The most accurate data available dates to 1915, when the General Conference sent the first Adventist missionary to El Salvador. The missionary was the colporteur John L. Brown, who arrived with his family. He started his work in 1916 and formed the first Sabbath School with 12 members. By the end of that same year, that group became a congregation of 19 members.³

Three months after the Brown family came to El Salvador, J. A. Bodle and his wife arrived in the city of Santa Ana as self-supporting workers. There they established a bilingual school, starting the work of evangelism in that city. In mid-1916, family issues arose, and they left the field.⁴ In May 1918, Carl F. Staben was commissioned to work in El Salvador.⁵ He traveled from New Orleans, and upon arriving in El Salvador, he found that the capital had been affected by an earthquake. So he moved to the city of Santa Ana.⁶

In August 1917, the first church in the city of Santa Ana was organized.⁷ In late 1918, R. W. Parmele, president of the North Latin-American Union, worked with the leaders in the field to purchase property in Santa Ana on which to build a house for the workers and a small chapel.⁸ The property, purchased in September of 1918 with funds appropriated by the mission board, was valued at US\$280.00 and extended over half a block.⁹ The greatest effort was made for the work in Santa Ana during the administration of Carl F. Staben. But in 1920, Staben accepted a call to work in Honduras.¹⁰

During 1919, a self-supporting couple, W. W. Murray and his wife, came to work. Brother Murray built a clinic on the property that the mission had purchased in 1918. Many people came there for help.¹¹ Although the work there faced many economic challenges, Murray never let himself be discouraged.¹² By 1922, however, after four years of hard work, the family moved to Guatemala.¹³

At the beginning of 1919, Juan Hernández spent some time working in Santa Ana with Miguel Rodríguez. They started their time as workers in 1918, and even though he stopped working in 1921, Hernández stayed in Santa Ana for two years and in Sonsonate for a year. These brothers stand out in the history of the development of the work in the western area as the first local missionaries who promoted Adventism.¹⁴

In 1942, the construction of a church in Sonsonate was started. The leader of this project was Pastor Nygaard. He had help from Victor Printemps,¹⁵ who carried out an outstanding work on behalf of the spread of the gospel in the west. Also, Rafael Sagastume carried out a work in Santa Ana.¹⁶ In early 1943, Sonsonate had a building that served as a school for the church, but they didn't yet have teachers. By that time, the work of the Adventist Church had also been started in Chalchuapa.¹⁷

History of the Organization of the West El Salvador Conference

During the following years, the work of the Adventist Church in the western area of the country grew a great deal. This demonstrated growth led the Metropolitan El Salvador Conference to reorganize the territory in its administrative meeting on November 26, 2001. They separated from its territory the districts of Santa Ana, Sonsonate, and Ahuachapán to form a trial West El Salvador Mission.¹⁸ At that same meeting, Victor Burgos Tercero was named as coordinator of the trial mission.¹⁹ They also named the first leaders for the mission as well as the field secretaries who would be the first coordinators and assistants to the president for evangelism in the new mission.²⁰

During its trial, the mission had the support and leadership of Pablo Perla, the president of the Central American Union, and the dedicated help of Otoniel Zelaya, the president of the El Salvador Conference. In the beginning, the headquarters of the mission was in the home of Victor Burgos.²¹

At the end of 2006, the trial West El Salvador Mission became the West El Salvador Mission. Nestor David Morán Escobar was its president, and Edmundo Reyes was secretary-treasurer. Its headquarters was a house in the Escalón Colony in the city of Santa Ana. Later, it was moved to a house in the Santa Lucía Colony in the same area.²²

On November 29, 2002, the administration of the El Salvador Conference in the city of San Salvador voted to purchase a property in the city of Santa Ana for US\$78,571.43 to build offices for the West El Salvador Mission. The property was located on Boulevard los 44 in the Vías de Mediterráneo Colony, next to the Tolteka Hotel.²³ In January 2006, the ribbon was cut at the inauguration ceremony of the West El Salvador Mission building. Matthew Bediako, the secretary of the General Conference, was in charge of the inauguration together with Israel Leito, president of the Inter-American Division. Also present were the administrators of the Mid-Central American Union Mission: Alfredo Argueta, president, and Saúl Ortiz, secretary-treasurer. Also present were Nestor Morán, president of the West El

Salvador Mission, who led out in the building project, and Edmundo Reyes as secretary-treasurer^{24,24}

On November 18, 2013, at a meeting in the city of San Salvador, the administration of the El Salvador Union voted to change the status of the West El Salvador Mission from mission to conference.²⁵ The constituents met to celebrate the change of status on March 3, 2015, in the Tolteka Hotel in the city of Santa Ana. Present were Israel Leito, president of the Inter-American Division, and Abel Pacheco López, president of the El Salvador Union. Also present at this historic event were delegates from all the churches that composed the West El Salvador Mission.²⁶ The nominating committee for this meeting proposed to the constituency the following names as leaders for the 2015–2019 period: Leonel Arteaga, president; Juan Carlos Durán, secretary; and Fidel Aguirre, treasurer.²⁷

When the West El Salvador Conference was organized, it had a membership of 39,967. Up to mid-2019, the conference had recorded 4,186 baptisms. It also recorded organizing 26 churches and planting 48 groups.²⁸

In the area of Christian stewardship, the West El Salvador Conference reached 84.6 percent of its budget, and for the years 2018 and 2019, there has been outstanding growth.²⁹

In 2015, the administrators of the West El Salvador Conference authorized the purchase of a property located in the city of Santa Ana, at the cost of US\$160,000. It has as its objective the construction of an auditorium and camp for the activities of the field.³⁰ Also, with the help of the ministry of Reach Out, 20 new church buildings have been built in the West El Salvador Conference.³¹

List of Presidents

Victor Daniel Burgos Tercero (2001–2003);³² Néstor Morán (2004–2007);³³ Javier Mejía (2008–2010);³⁴ Abel Pacheco (2010 interim);³⁵ Edwin Valiente (2010–2012);³⁶ Jaime Torres (2012–2013);³⁷ Leonel Arteaga (2014–).³⁸

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