



Northeast Mexican Conference headquarters.

Photo courtesy of Northeast Mexican Conference.

## Northeast Mexican Conference

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### PABLO PARTIDA

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The Northeast Mexican Conference is a part of the Inter-American Division of Seventh-day Adventists. It was organized in 1924, reorganized in 1977, 1988, 1998, and reorganized and territory divided in 2017.

### Territory and Statistics

The Northeast Mexican Conference has as its territory the municipalities of the state of Nuevo León: Allende, Aramberri, Cadereyta de Jiménez, China, Doctor Arroyo, Doctor Coss, Galeana, General Bravo, General Terán, General Zaragoza, Hualahuises, Iturbide, Juárez, Linares, Los Aldamas, Los Herreras, Los Ramones, Mier y

Noriega, Montemorelos, Rayones, San Pedro Garza García, and Santiago as well as the sections of Monterrey and Guadalupe that lie south of the Santa Catarina River. The offices of the Northeast Mexican Conference are located at 2054 Pedro Martínez Avenue, Florida Division, Monterrey, Nuevo León, Mexico.<sup>1</sup>

In 2018, the Northeast Mexican Conference had 68 organized churches and 66 groups; these are cared for by 25 credentialed pastors, five licensed pastors, 25 credentialed missionaries, four licensed missionaries, and five licensed colporteurs. The church had members in 16 of the 25 municipalities in its territory and had a membership of 16,687. Women make up 55.5 percent of the membership, and 44.5 percent are men.<sup>2</sup>

## Institutions

Soledad Acevedo de los Reyes Adventist Secondary School. This school is located at 211 Camino al Vapor, Zambrano Colony, Montemorelos, Nuevo León, Mexico, and is part of the Adventist educational system of the North Mexican Union Conference. It has legal standing under the agency of the *Asociación Civil, Filantrópica y Educativa del Noreste*. It offers the pre-school, elementary, and secondary levels and is accredited by the education department of the state of Nuevo León. Currently it has 510 students and a staff of 47—six administrators, three office staff, four support personnel, and 34 teachers.

Vicente Suárez Institute. This school is located at 332 Principal Street in the Ladrillera Colony, Monterrey, Nuevo León. It offers the preschool, elementary, secondary and preparatory levels, and is accredited by the secretary of education of the state of Nuevo León. It currently has 280 students and a staff of 27 – four administrators, 18 teachers, three office staff and two support personnel.

## Origins of the Adventist Church in the Territory

The year 1904 was a milestone in the history of Seventh-day Adventists in Mexico since that year was when an American colporteur arrived in Monterrey. She was the first Adventist to preach the gospel there, and she did it through the printed word.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, we do not know her name, but the memory of her endures. The first persons interested in receiving Bible studies and in keeping the Sabbath as the true day of rest were results of her work. Two years later, another colporteur, A. N. Colunga, moved to Monterrey to preach the gospel through the printed word and to give Bible studies to those who were interested. In this way, the first group of Seventh-day Adventists began to form in the territory of the Northeast Mexican Conference.

Little by little, this group began to coalesce. In 1912, Pastor George Washington Caviness baptized 16 persons in Monterrey. This is the first known record of an Adventist baptism held in the city of Monterrey. In that same year, three more colporteurs came into the territory. Carlos S. Nicolás was from Spain, and W. F. Mayer and Hersel Butka were Americans. These young students worked in the towns of Linares and Montemorelos. In Montemorelos, they found people who were studying the Bible and a book entitled *El Rey que viene* (*The Coming King*

). When these people asked to learn more about the Adventist message, the colporteurs gave them Bible studies, and soon those people began to keep the Sabbath.

The Seventh-day Adventists began their work in Monterrey in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and that among the first converts were Roberto Treviño and his wife as well as Hermelinda de Maza. Among the pioneers of the Adventist Church in Monterrey, we find the names of Mrs. Cruz Reyes, who started the first group, a man with the last name of González, and two lay members whose names we do not know. These members formed part of the group of believers who later became the first organized church in Monterrey.<sup>4</sup>

In 1932, the group met in the home of María de la Luz Cantú González, who lived on the corner of Doblado and Tapia streets. At that time, Simón Conde—who along with his wife and two daughters attended the group's meetings—was ordained as a minister and later became the pastor of that church. The church that was organized at that time had about 35 members. They met in a large hall of the González home. They would sing, accompanied on a pedal organ played by Sister Consuelo González, who had recently left a convent where she was the pianist. The church met in this home for about four years. Later they moved to a room in a building on the corner of Isaac Garza and Zuazua streets, the building owned by a labor union. From there they moved to a building on Carvajal y de la Cueva and then to a place on the corner of Platón Sánchez and Treviño streets. Finally, they began to meet on Vallarta Street, and the church began to be known as the Vallarta Seventh-day Adventist Church.<sup>5</sup>

In July of 1938, construction was finished on the first Adventist church in the city of Monterrey, the Vallarta Church. Pastor Antonio Torres was the pastor of the church when it was inaugurated on September 4, 1938. Among the first to be baptized in the new church were Dr. Raymundo Garza and Brother Marcelino Cárdenas. Brother Cárdenas was a man who had applied to work on the construction of the church, and while working, he learned and then accepted the message of salvation. His baptism was held on Sabbath, August 27, 1938.<sup>6</sup>

Dr. Raymundo Garza, who was then the dean of the school of medicine at the Autonomous University of Nuevo León, joined the church after listening to an Adventist radio program broadcast from Havana, Cuba. For several years he was the director of the health department of the Mexican Union. This doctor responded to a recommendation on the part of the Inter-American Division that advised that small clinics be started in connection with the churches throughout Mexico. Together with Dr. Iner S. Ritchie, who also was associated with the health department of the union, he started a dispensary with the name of Adventist Clinic of Monterrey. It was held in a room on the first floor of the Vallarta Church with an entry from Matamoros Street. The clinic operated in that place until 1964, giving free services to the community. Prior to starting this clinic, Dr. Garza had also been one of the founders of the Montemorelos Hospital.<sup>7</sup>

## Events that Led to the Formation of the Conference

In 1923, the Aztec Union Mission was organized; it had four missions. By 1928, it already had increased to six missions, one of which was the Gulf and Río Bravo Mission with a territory that included the states of Coahuila, Durango, Nuevo León, San Luis Potosí, Tamaulipas, Chihuahua, Durango, Zacatecas, and Northern Veracruz.<sup>8</sup> In 1948, the Gulf and Río Bravo Mission changed its name to North Mexican Mission.<sup>9</sup>

After more than 20 years, the North Mexican Mission had grown considerably; it had 41 organized churches and 7,406 members. The administrators of the mission asked that the necessary studies be undertaken in order to change its status to that of a conference.<sup>10</sup> On February 23, 1977, a constituency session was held under the leadership of Pastor B. L. Archbold, president of the Inter-American Division, and Pastor Velino Salazar, president of the Mexican Union Mission, and the change was made from North Mexican Mission to North Mexican Conference. The offices of the North Mexican Conference would continue to be in Monterrey. The first president was Pastor Neftalí Quintero, and the secretary-treasurer was accountant Pablo Balboa. In 1976 and 1977, a new office was built for the conference at 2054 Pedro Martínez Street, Florida Division, Monterrey, Nuevo León.

During the next 10 years, the North Mexican Conference grew in a marked way, its membership reaching 20,208. With such a vast territory (covering the states of Chihuahua, Coahuila, Durango, Nuevo León, San Luis Potosí, and Tamaulipas), it was decided to ask the executive boards of the North Mexican Union Conference and of the Inter-American Division to study the possibility of reorganizing this territory. After considering the request, the Inter-American Division created an evaluation committee.

The committee met on December 8, 1987, at the Inter-American Division office and recommended that the reorganization requested by the North Mexican Conference be made and that it take place at the next triennial session of the North Mexican Conference. The session was held at La Morita, Nuevo León from July 27 to 30, 1988. There it was voted to divide the North Mexican Conference into two new fields. The Northeast Mexican Conference would have the states of Coahuila, Nuevo León, San Luis Potosí, and Tamaulipas. It would continue to have its headquarters in Monterrey had use the same building as the North Mexican Conference had. A new field—the North Mexican Mission—would have the states of Chihuahua, Durango, and the Lake Region, with its headquarters in the city of Chihuahua, Chihuahua.<sup>11</sup>

In this way, the Northeast Mexican Conference was born. From the very beginning, it experienced a notable growth, both in new members and in financial stability. It soon became the most stable field of the North Mexican Union Conference, and it became known as a vast and challenging territory because of its growth in membership and its number of districts, institutions, churches, and congregations. For this reason, on October 12 of 1997, a special constituency meeting was called in La Morita, Nuevo León, to consider a further reorganization of territory. A request was sent through official channels to the Inter-American Division asking that consideration be given to reorganizing the territory again. On November 4 of that year, the Inter-American Division accepted a recommendation to reorganize the field, and on January 25, 1998, a new field was created

that was called the Gulf Mexican Mission, with its headquarters in Cd. Victoria, Tamaulipas. The Northeast Mexican Conference would now have the states of Nuevo León and Coahuila. Its offices would continue to be in Monterrey. The Gulf Mexican Mission would have the states of San Luis Potosí and Tamaulipas.<sup>12</sup>

The Northeast Mexican Conference continued to grow. On May 28, 2016, at another special constituency meeting, it was again voted to request the Inter-American Division for a further reorganization of territory. The administrative board of the North Mexican Union Conference approved the request and passed it on to the Division. On September 28, 2016, the committee established to study the matter recommended a reorganization of the territory of the Northeast Mexican Conference by creating a new field, the Regiomontana Mission. On October 28, 2016, the administrative board of the Inter-American Division approved the recommendation. During the Quadrennial Session of the Northeast Mexican Conference held on July 17, 2017, the restructuring of the field took place, and the Regiomontana Mission was created, taking over some of the municipalities of both Nuevo León and Coahuila. Joel González was named president, Agustín Sánchez became the secretary, and Edmundo Gómez the treasurer.<sup>13</sup>

## Future Plans

The Northeast Mexican Conference plans to:

Establish an Adventist presence in the municipality of San Pedro Graza García through health projects and family education;

Increase the Adventist presence in Linares through the creation of a new district;

Ensure that 100 percent of the districts have an established yearly strategic plan;

Create and maintain 1,000 small groups throughout the territory;

Establish an Adventist presence in the municipalities that currently do not have one;

Establish and organize 53 centers of influence in the churches now organized;

Establish 18 new organized Sabbath Schools;

Organize and carry out two evangelistic campaigns per year in each of its churches;

Promote evangelism as a lifestyle in all areas of the church;

Increase the number of colporteurs and strengthen the ministry of the printed word.

## List of Presidents

Armando Miranda Conchos (1988-1989); Otoniel Reyes Márquez (1989-1994); Cristóbal Werekeintzen Bayardo (1995-1998); Jesús Esteban Medina Rodríguez (1998-2005); Jaime Medrano Nieto (2005-2009); Luis Arturo King García (2009-2010); Zeferino Luna Hernández (2010-2013); Filiberto Grajeda (2013-2017); Joel González Velázquez (2017- ).

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### NOTES

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2. "Secretariat Report," First Annual Session of the Northeast Mexican Conference 2017-2021, November 11, 2018, Monterrey, Mexico.
3. Velino Salazar Escarpulli, *Cien Años de Adventismo en México* (Montemorelos, N. L. Mexico: Centro de Producción Unión Mexicana del Norte, 1997), 49.
4. *La Enciclopedia de Monterrey*, Volume 1, page 68.

5. Neftalí Quintero Valles, Compiler, *Marco Histórico de la Iglesia de Vallarta, Información Obtenida en Entrevistas con Diversos Miembros* (Monterrey: Imprenta Oswaldo Pequeño, 1975), 10-11.
6. *Ibid.*, 4.
7. Mario Riquelme, "Informe Gráfico de la Obra Médica en México," report given on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Montemorelos University, November 13-16, 2002.
8. "Gulf and Río Bravo Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1928), 249.
9. "North Mexican Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1949), 141.
10. "North Mexican Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1978), 225.
11. "Northeast Mexican Conference" and "North Mexican Mission," *Seventh-Day Adventist Yearbook* (1989), 163-164.
12. "Northeast Mexican Conference" and "Gulf Mexican Mission," *Seventh-Day Adventist Yearbook* (1999), 149, accessed April 30, 2021.
13. "Northeast Mexican Conference" and "Regiomontana Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (2018), 128-129.

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