



Southern Ukrainian Conference (SUC/UUC) Headquarters
Photo courtesy of Southern Ukrainian Conference.

Southern Ukrainian Conference

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Vladimir Krupskiy, M.S.A. in administration and social development (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan), began his pastoral service in 1984. From 1993 to 1994 he was serving as secretary-treasurer of Southern Ukrainian Conference/UUC, and from 1994 to 1998 as president of Southern Ukrainian Conference. In 1998 Krupskiy was elected president of the Ukrainian Union Conference. In 2010 he was elected secretary of Euro-Asia Division. Since 2015 Krupskiy has been serving as president of Caucasus Union Mission.

The Southern Ukrainian Conference is a church unit in southern Ukraine, in operation since 1990.

Territory and Statistics

Period: 1990–

Territory: Kherson, Mykolaiv, and Odessa Regions

Population: 4,537,454

Membership: 4,458

Churches: 85

The conference's headquarters address: PO Box 45, 19A 5th Ingulskaya Street, Nikolaev, Ukraine 54034

Origin of Seventh-day Adventist Work in the Territory²

During the time of Imperial Russia, when Adventists began working in the territory of the Southern Ukrainian Conference, it belonged to the Bessarabia, Nikolaev, Podolia, and Taurida Governorates. After World War I and the rise of the Soviet Union, church units in this area disappear from the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, from 1931 to 1981. The last known church units to have covered the territory were the Azov, Black Sea, and Podolian Conferences.

The ministry of the Adventist Church in the Southern Ukrainian Conference dates back to the second half of the 19th century. It started in Crimea, then a part of the Taurida Governorate of the Russian Empire. The Adventist message was brought by former German colonists who had immigrated to America and accepted Adventism. They send Adventist books and tracts to their relatives who remained in Russia. In 1882 several colonists in Crimea began observing the seventh-day Sabbath.³ After a short time other Germans from Crimea, the Dnieper region, and other places were made aware of the Adventist message.

Jakob Reswick was one of the Adventist pioneers of German descent who first immigrated to the United States and joined the Church through the ministry of Ludwig Richard Conradi. Despite being about 80 years old and having a speech defect (lingual titubation), Resvik was determined to go back to Russia and become a missionary. He returned to Crimea in 1883 and brought with him tons of Adventist literature, which he distributed from door to door.

At that time it was illegal to spread publicly any non-Orthodox message. Pretending to have poor eyesight, Reswick would ask someone to read the booklets to him. If readers became interested in the message, Reswick gave them the booklets. In this way an elderly missionary managed to organize several groups of believers in the villages of Saki and Yaponchi.

In early July 1886, Ludwig Conradi came to Crimea by boat via Odessa. The evangelist was pleasantly surprised that many Sabbath keepers, mainly German colonists, were ready to be baptized. Conradi was accompanied by Gerhard Perk (1859-1930), a colporteur and member of the British Bible Society who was born in one of the Mennonite colonies in southern Russia.

Upon arrival in the city of Yevpatoria, Conradi and Perk met with a group of German Baptists and spent two days with them preaching the Adventist message. In the village of Temir Bolat they visited one of several groups of Mennonites who had been keeping the Sabbath for four years. After several weeks of evangelistic meetings a number of believers decided to join the Adventist Church. Two of them were baptized in a lake near the village of Berdi Bolat (today Privolnoye). Seventeen more, mostly Baptists and Mennonites, joined the Church by their public profession of faith.

In 1886 the first local Seventh-day Adventist church was established in the village of Berdi Bolat. It was the official beginning of Adventism in the Southern Ukrainian Conference, as well as in Russia and Ukraine at large. One of the new members, Gottfried Tetz, became the first elder of this church.

At the beginning of the 20th century the first Adventist churches were organized in the cities of Odessa (1908), Simferopol (1912), Kherson (1914), Nikolaev (1914), and Elisavetgrad (now Kropivnytskiy) (1917).

Organizational History

In 1967, 1978, and 1981, Ukrainian church units were organized, all called districts. They first appeared in the *Yearbook* in 1982, after decades of no reports from Ukraine due to communism. They were listed under the Association of Seventh-day Adventists in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.⁴ The Kherson District comprised the Crimean, Kherson, and Kirovograd Regions. Its headquarters was located at Komarov Street 39, Kherson. In 1982 members numbered 827, led by Senior Pastor I. A. Vinshnevsky. The Odessa District comprised the Odessa and Nikolayev Region, headquartered at located at ul. Ilyachovskaya 62, Odessa. Its membership was 660 in 1982, led by Senior Pastor G. G. Galan.⁵

The Odessa District grew to include the Dnepropetrovsk, Kharkov, and Poltava Regions (or perhaps the territorial description is inadequate in the first years).⁶

By 1986 the Kherson District had been renamed the Crimean District.⁷ In 1987 the Ukrainian Districts were reorganized. The Kherson District and a part of the Odessa District merged to form the Southern Ukrainian District. It thus comprised the Crimea, Kherson, Kirovograd, Nikolaev, and Odessa Regions. Its address was ul. Ilyachovskaya 62, Odessa. Initial membership was 1,306. The only starting officer listed was President G. G. Galan.⁸

From 1987 to 1994 the conference's primary goal was to develop its organizational structure, organize and plan the work of departments, and strengthen the financial basis. Much attention was given to spiritual growth and the unity of pastors, learning of and respect for the Church Manual, pastoral mentorship, and teamwork. The conference regularly printed the *Golos Nastavnika (The Voice of Mentor)* newsletter that included materials for spiritual support and practical training of pastors, including extracts from Ellen White's writings.

In 1990 all the Ukrainian districts became conferences, so the Southern Ukrainian District became the Southern Ukrainian Conference. Its territory and headquarters remained the same. Membership was 1,366. Starting officers were President G. G. Galan, Secretary I. A. Vishnevsky, and Treasurer A. I. Pilipchuk.⁹

In the 1990s, foreign evangelists were especially favored by Ukrainian people. They also made a great contribution to the development of the Southern Ukrainian Conference. It was a difficult time for Ukraine's economy. The country was suffering the consequences of the collapse of the Soviet Union and was facing new challenges as an

independent state. At the same time there was an atmosphere of freedom and spiritual hunger. The public was open to the gospel message.

The Southern Ukrainian Conference took advantage of this situation and invited many foreign evangelists who held massive campaigns that sometimes lasted for several weeks. Among those who came to preach were Rudolf Skoretz (Canada), Lowell Hargreaves, Dan Serns, Larry Lichtenwalter, Wilmar Gonzalez, Jim Gilley, Max Trevino, and Agatha Thrash from Uchee Pines Institute. Such outreach programs usually included educational lectures on the Bible, faith, lifestyle, biblical prophecies, Jesus, and God's plan of salvation. The programs culminated in an appeal and baptism of those who had accepted the truth.

In 1993 the conference offices were listed at ul. Lenina 3, Kryjanovka, Odessa,¹⁰ and the year after at ul. 5th Ingul'skaya 19, Nikolayev,¹¹ where they remain today.

From 1994 to 2000 the conference prioritized public evangelism and membership growth.

The 2000-2003 period was devoted to planting new churches and acquiring church buildings under the Euro-Asia Division's 300x300x300 initiative. The plan involved teaching and sending 300 pastors to 300 unentered places, and acquiring 300 church buildings in the territory of the former USSR. As a result, the Southern Ukrainian Conference organized 13 new churches and purchased 13 church buildings.

At the same time, a small groups program was launched for a more effective Adventist mission implementation. The program encouraged local members to meet in small groups during the week for Christian fellowship and spiritual encouragement.

The Southern Ukrainian Conference has set a goal to plant a church or a company in every town or city in the near future. The conference has supported the General Conference initiative "Every Day with Jesus," aimed at motivating each member to grow spiritually by developing a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ through prayer, Bible reading, and serving others.

In 2010 the Southern Ukrainian Conference concentrated its efforts on organizing Centers of Influence with the support of local churches. Thanks to this new strategy, the conference established in the city of Nikolaev a regional media center as a branch of the Nadiya TV Channel, and opened two Christian secondary schools in Kherson and Odessa. In the Nikolaev Region the conference also founded a charitable fund called "Alfa-Nick" for protecting children's rights and supporting orphans, families with many children, and disadvantaged families.¹² The fund strives to prevent child abandonment and promotes foster homes. "Alfa-Nick" is working on building a welfare center with four foster homes for 35-40 children. The first home opened April 27, 2012. In addition, the welfare center will accommodate an educational center with a kindergarten, a secondary school, sports and playgrounds, and children's creativity camps.

In 2014, Russia annexed Crimea. Consequently, the Crimea Mission was organized that same year and cut off from the Southern Ukrainian Conference. It is not part of the Ukrainian Union, but an attached field of the Euro-Asian Division.¹³

Conference membership peaked at 8,051 in 1999, few years after it was organized, but the trend has been downward since.¹⁴

Since 2011 the Southern Ukrainian Conference published a monthly Christian educational newspaper titled *Accent*. With a circulation of 25,000, it mostly targets secular readers.

Since 2017 the conference has worked on involving every church member in outreach and community services. They also have a plan to develop online ministries.

List of Presidents

Kherson District Senior Pastor: No listing, 1978–1981; I. A. Vishnevsky, 1982–1985.

Crimean District: Senior Pastor: I. A. Vishnevsky, 1986–1987.

Odessa District Senior Pastor: No listing, 1967–1981; G. G. Galan, 1982–1987.

Southern Ukrainian District President: G. G. Galan, 1987–1989.

Southern Ukrainian Conference President: G. G. Galan, 1990–1991; V. I. Kucheryavenko, 1992–1994; V. A. Krupsky, 1995–1998; nobody listed, 1999; Alexander A. Pankov, 2000; Anatoly I. Begas, 2001–2003; Valery N. Ryaboy, 2004–2007; Andrew A. Shamray, 2008–2011; Igor V. Shevchenko, 2012–.

SOURCES

"Annual Charts and Statistics" for "Southern Ukrainian Conference (1989–Present)." Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research. Accessed July 2, 2019. http://adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldInstID=125652

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NOTES

1. All the information, except the period, from "Southern Ukrainian Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (2018), 80.?
2. See E. V. Zaitsev, *Istoriya Tserkvi ASD*, Zaoksky: Istochnik Zhizni, 2008; *Istoriya Tserkvi Khristian Adventistov Sed'mogo Dnia v Ukraine* (Kiev: Dzherelo Zhyttia, 2003), 33-35?
3. A. Belov, *Adventizm* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Politicheskoy Literatury, 1968), 46.?
4. "Association of Seventh-day Adventist [sic] in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1982), 335; "Ukrainian Union Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1990), 348.?
5. For information and statistics on the Districts at their commencement, see "Kherson District" and "Odessa District," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1982), 336.?
6. "Odessa District," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1986), 364. When all the ten original districts with their descriptions are mapped out on a map of Ukraine, four regions are not listed under any of them: Chernihiv, Dnipopetrovsk, Poltava, and Suma. See "Association of the Seventh-day Adventist in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1982), 335-36.?
7. "Crimean District," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1982), 364.?
8. For information and statistics on the district at its commencement, see "Southern Ukrainian District," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1988), 374.?
9. For information and statistics on the conference at its commencement, see "Southern Ukrainian Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1990), 349.?
10. "Southern Ukrainian Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1993), 102.?
11. "Southern Ukrainian Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1994), 104.?
12. See www.alfa-nik.org.?
13. "Crimea Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (2015), 91.?
14. "Annual Charts and Statistics" for "Southern Ukrainian Conference (1989-Present)," Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, http://adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldInstID=125652, accessed July 2, 2019.?

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