

Lago Guatemala Mission

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The Lago Guatemala Mission of Seventh-day Adventists was established in 2016 when the Central Guatemala Conference was divided.¹

Territory and Statistics

The territory of the Lago Guatemala Mission covers Amatitlan, Colonia San Cristobal de Mixco, Villa Nueva, Villa Canales, San Miguel Petapa municipalities in the department of Guatemala; the municipalities of Alotenango, Antigua Guatemala, Ciudad Vieja, Jocotenango, Magdalena Milpas Altas, Parramos, Pastores, San Antonio Aguas Calientes, San Miguel Duenas, Santa Catarina Barahora, and Santa Maria de Jesus in Sacatepequez Department; and the municipalities of La Gomera, Palin, San Vicente Pacaya, and Santa Lucia Cotzumalguapa in Escuintla Department.²

This territory has a diversity of climates, but mainly it is warm and temperate. The official language is Spanish, but some communities still use their Maya languages, among them, the Kaqchikel and Poqomam.³ The density of the population and the multicultural and extensive nature of the territory justify the mission's existence.⁴

As of June 30, 2019, the Lago Guatemala Mission had 74 organized churches and 16,439 members.⁵ The churches are cared for by two ordained ministers and six licensed pastors.⁶

The mission headquarters is located at Block 1, lot 98, 3 Llano Alto, Zone 6, Villa Nueva, Guatemala. Currently, it has 50 active employees, including administrators, department heads, district pastors, office staff, teachers, and service personnel.

Institutions

Southern Adventist Technical School is located at Primer Callejón Cantón los Voladores, 0-04, Zone 3 of the municipality of Escuintla, department of Escuintla. The school offers preschool, elementary, and secondary levels. The beginnings of the school go back to 1985, at which time a group of members saw the need for their children to get a Christian education based on principles and values. They took the necessary steps to open an educational center and received approval in 1986. The school was named Maranatha Adventist Private Co-

Educational School.⁷ In 2004, under the leadership of José Silvano Cuxún Guzmán, steps were taken to get approval to operate the Southern Adventist Technical School.⁷ Later, in 2006, the Southern Adventist Technical School was included in Instituciones Educativas, S.A. In 2014, the school was accredited by the Adventist Accreditation Association for three years. It received a renewal of its accreditation in 2017 for the preschool, elementary, and secondary levels for four years, from July 2017 until July 2021.⁸

Orion Adventist College was established in 1988 in the municipality of Jocotenango in the department of Sacatepéquez, Guatemala. Aura de Pinho initiated the required steps to open a school in that place because a group of members desired an Adventist education for the children of the church and of the community. The first principal of the school was Esmeralda de Cuellar. With her secretary and four other teachers, she began to offer the elementary level in the Sabbath School rooms in the Jocotenango Adventist Church. During the first year of their work, 47 students enrolled. In 1989, the Minister of Education of Guatemala authorized Orión Adventist School to offer the preschool and elementary levels. On July 7, 2006, by Resolution No. 118-2006 of the Education Department of Sacatepéquez, the new name of the school became Orion Adventist College. In 2005, the school changed from homeschool status and was included in the Instituciones Educativas, S.A. The last accreditation granted by the Adventist Accreditation Association in 2016 was for five years,⁹ the maximum amount of time that is granted for an accreditation. In 2019, this institution had 240 students in the preschool, elementary, and secondary levels.⁹

Origins of the Adventist Church in the Lago Guatemala Mission Territory

Basically, the foundations of the Lago Guatemala Mission are intimately linked with the establishment of several churches in the territory. The first church in the mission was the Escuintla Adventist Church. In 1941 the Guatemala Mission of Seventh-day Adventists was located on 2nd Avenue and 10th Street, Zone 1, Guatemala City. They held a series of evangelistic meetings in the municipality of Escuintla, where there were no Adventists. These meetings were led by José Canjura Aguilar, an evangelist from El Salvador. He preached daily for ten weeks in the Aurora Theater, located in Zone 1 of the main city of the municipality.¹⁰ This event was a great success, as 75 people were baptized.

Without having a place to meet, the new converts decided to rent a place near the Aurora Theater, where they stayed for a short time. Then, through Gregoria Acuña de Gil, they bought a property for the price of US\$170 for the construction of a church, which began in 1965. In that same year, the Adventist message reached the Los Cerritos farm, and Pastor Israel Romero was sent to preach at Milagro Masagua, Santa Lucía Cotzumalguapa, and Chiquimulilla.

In 1974, the construction of the Central Adventist Church in Escuintla was finished at 3-25 3rd Street, Zone 1. The members of the church continued doing missionary work, reaching new places such as the Las Golondrinas Colony, where today there is an organized church. They also reached out to the La Industria and San Antonio neighborhoods located on the lower hills of the Fuego volcano.¹¹ While the members of the Escuintla Church were reaching out to the southwest, Cristóbal Castañaza from Jalapa came to evangelize the northeast of the department. He continued working until the Palín Church was started, from which other churches were soon born.¹² At this time, the Adventist message has reached the majority of the municipalities of Escuintla.

The second church in this territory was in Villa Nueva, where in 1983, members from the Central Adventist Church in Guatemala City began to do missionary work. After considering several areas of the municipality, they established themselves in the central part of Villa Nueva. They continued working there until they organized the Villa Nueva Central Adventist Church in August 1990. It had 10 families, giving it 60 members. Later, a group of its members went out to start a new church, the Planes de Villa Nueva Adventist Church.¹³

The third strong church of Lago Guatemala Mission is Ciudad Real Church, organized in 1992. This mission field was opened by members of Guajitos Adventist Church in Zone 21 of the capital. It is also necessary to mention San Cristóbal Adventist Church, located in the Mixco municipality, which began as a result of the "small groups" plan, with members of the church from Zone 7. At the end of 1999, a group was formed, and in 2000, the church was organized. Out of this church came two other churches, El Campanero and Vista al Valle.

Another important zone of the mission is the department of Sacatepéquez. The preaching of the Adventist message in this place started in Ciudad Vieja around 1957 with Francisco Tubac, who was selling milk from house to house. As he sold his product, he would share the gospel. Before long, a group of people would get together to study the Bible at the home of the Cruz Vásquez family. Nevertheless, after a short time, problems began. The problems grew to the point where people were throwing stones at and insulting members of the group, so they had to move on. In 1973, they purchased a plot of land, where they began to build a church in 1997. This is where the Ciudad Vieja Seventh-day Adventist Church is located, an organized church with about 70 members, the first in this region.¹⁴

The Jocotenango Seventh-day Adventist Church is an important church for the Lago Guatemala Mission. It has a beautiful building next to Orion Adventist College. It began in 1969 when a missionary family named Cummings came from the United States to establish a health institute. They met Luis Bac in Jocotenango and gave him Bible studies. He was baptized with three of his children. Later, they started their Naturalistic Institute in Santa Lucía Milpas Altas.

In 1973 they returned to Jocotenango and every Sabbath would get together with friends and relatives to study the Bible. Little by little, other people joined. In 1981, the idea of buying a plot of land on which to build a church was born. The dream came true when in 1982, Luis Bac and Elisseo Pinho donated a plot of land. With God's

help and various donations, the members built the church, which was inaugurated in 1987. From this church, members have gone out to start other churches such as El Tizate, Parramos, San Felipe, and Antigua.¹⁵

Organization of Lago Guatemala Mission

The gospel continued to prosper in the departments of Escuintla, Sacatepéquez, and several municipalities of Guatemala to such an extent that the administrators of the central region of Guatemala realized that the territory needed more personalized attention. In 2010, they proposed creating a new mission field, which would be formed by separating several churches from the Central Guatemala Mission. The Inter-American Division approved this project, and a trial field was started that would later become an officially recognized mission.¹⁶

A constituency meeting of the Guatemala Union Mission with delegates from the Central Guatemala Mission and the Metropolitan Conference proposed and voted to reorganize the territory of both fields. In that same year, the reorganization of the Central Guatemala Mission was proposed, and a new trial mission was formed, initially called the South Central Guatemala Mission.

When the project started, there were only 57 churches in the area, distributed into eight districts, with 11,964 members. Also, Adventist church members were working in 17 new places where later churches would be established. Thanks to the support of the membership and of the administration, two properties in Villa Nueva were purchased and adapted to create offices where the new field could operate comfortably from the very beginning.

In 2016, Lago Guatemala Mission was officially established along with its territory. The property deed is registered in the Inter-American Division. The official recognition of the new mission took place in Cancún, Mexico, on January 7, 2016, at a meeting presided over by Israel Leito, president; and Elie Henry, secretary.

Strategies for Fulfilling the Mission

The mission uses five strategies to continue to move the work forward:

1. In-service days for revival, with the participation of pastors and lay members
2. Continuing education for pastors in the areas of evangelism and leadership
3. Training and certification for members to involve them in the mission
4. Formation of small groups and missionary couples
5. Continuing personal and public evangelism

Recent Happenings for Lago Guatemala Mission

The Fuego Volcano is located between the departments of Sacatepéquez, Escuintla, and Chimaltenango. Consequently, the communities most affected by the eruption of the volcano on June 3, 2018, were in the territory of Lago Guatemala Mission.

As soon as the news broke, pastors of these regions went to the location to check the members' welfare. Soon all mission personnel were organized to help the people living in the affected areas. Food, clothing, and other articles were gathered. All the local fields contributed, and help came from ADRA International. Seventeen loaded trucks were sent to different areas in the disaster zone, and many people were helped!⁷

Vision, Mission and Values

As an organized mission, the following ideals are set out to guide every task to honor God and finish the mission entrusted to us.

Vision: In 2020, Lago Guatemala Mission will be a revived church, consecrated, and committed to discipleship and the preaching of the eternal gospel. We hope to promote growth and holistic development in the members and institutions.

Mission: Baptized by the Holy Spirit, proclaiming the eternal gospel and preparing the church for the second coming of Christ.

Values: Consecration, commitment, passion, perseverance, unity, integrity, and service.

List of Presidents

Eddy Hernández (2010–2014); Roberto Sales (2015–2017); Adolfo Xol (2017–2018); Otoniel Trujillo (2019–).

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