

Image not found or type unknown



Central El Salvador Conference

MARIO ALBERTO CRUZ RIVERA, AND ALFONSO HUMBERTO ACOSTA SÁNCHEZ

Mario Alberto Cruz Rivera

Alfonso Humberto Acosta Sánchez graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Theology from the Central American Adventist University, and a Master's Degree in Pastoral Theology from the Inter-American Adventist Theological Seminary. Alfonso Humberto Acosta Sánchez began his pastoral ministry in 1999 and has worked in the Metropolitan El Salvador Conference, the Eastern El Salvador Conference and the Western El Salvador Conference. He currently serves as Executive Secretary of the Central El Salvador Conference. Alfonso Humberto Acosta Sánchez is married to Delia Glomary España Reyes, and they have two children.

Central El Salvador Conference is part of El Salvador Union Mission in the Inter-American Division of Seventh-day

Adventists.

The territory of the Central El Salvador Conference covers the districts of La Libertad, Chalatenango and some suburbs of San Salvador. In 2019, the Central Conference had 212 churches, 49 groups, 26,310 members¹ five schools, six ordained ministers, nine licensed ministers, nine office staff, and 119 denominational employees in other positions.² Its headquarters is currently located on Batres Montufar Street, house # B-7, Campestre Colony, San Salvador. It forms part of the El Salvador Union.

Origins of the Adventist Work in the Territory of the Conference

During the years 1946 to 1948, Pastor David García, originally from Guatemala, held the first evangelistic meetings together with his wife Sara and their children in Quezaltepeque, La Libertad. Some inhabitants of the city opposed his preaching and even threatened to hurt him, but he continued ministering. Among the first persons to be baptized were Isabel Valenzuela, Antonia Rodríguez, Francisca Cabrera, Antonio Parada, Francisca de Parada, and Tránsito Argueta. Notably, among the newly baptized was Tránsito Argueta, who was later joined by his son Víctor Manuel Argueta, the father of Pastors Alfredo Argueta and Tránsito Argueta. The Fajardo family, although not Adventist, rented their house to the emerging church. Twelve year-old Antonia Rodríguez would watch from the door of her house as Pastor David García sang with his family, and preached even if there was no one present. It was not long before she herself was baptized.

The church together with some of its members relocated to Girón de Quezaltepeque Street, then to the San Ramón Colony, the present location of the Quezaltepeque Adventist Church today.³ Among the pastors of the Quezaltepeque S.D.A Church were Pastor David García (1946-1948), followed by Pastor Francisco López (1950), and Pastor Rebelo (1950).⁴ The work spread to other areas such as Apopa, Chalatenango, and Citala under the leadership of Pastor Orley Ford, who came to the country as a missionary.⁵ Since the Advent message arrived in this area, there has been extraordinary membership and institutional growth.

Organizational History of the Central El Salvador Conference

In 2005, under the leadership of its president Víctor Daniel Burgos, the Central Central-American Union decided to create a new (experimental) field within the territory of the Metropolitan El Salvador Conference (AMAS). Initially, this experimental field was given provisional office space in the AMAS headquarters until a permanent location could be found for it.⁶ The members of the Executive Committee of the Metropolitan El Salvador Conference met and took vote 0093-2005, requesting the Central Central-American Union to approve this experimental field: Central El Salvador Mission, effective January 1, 2006.⁷ That year, 2006, the experimental Central El Salvador Mission began operations. The administrators appointed to carry out this task were Pastor Dany Perla as coordinator/president, Brother Herberth Escobar as accountant and secretary-treasurer, and Sister Esperanza de Ventura as office secretary. It wasn't until 2008 that the experimental mission officially became the Central El Salvador Mission under the leadership of pastor Santos Cañas as president and Brother Herberth Escobar as secretary-treasurer. By 2009, the number of districts had grown to 19 with the same number of pastors, and the membership reached 29,530⁸

In 2011, the administration of the newly formed El Salvador Union appointed Pastor Elmer Alférez as president and confirmed Brother Herberth Escobar as secretary-treasurer. In that same year, the El Salvador Adventist Training School (ECAS) came under the supervision of Central El Salvador Mission.⁹

On March 4, 2015, the third congress of the Central El Salvador Mission "Eyes Fixed On Jesus" was held. There were 125 delegates from the churches and companies, together with pastors, teachers and special guests. The congress was held in Nuevos Tiempos, San Salvador. It was there that the request for status change from mission to conference was made and became official. Overseeing the process was Pastor Israel Leito, then president of the Inter-American Division, along with Pastor Abel Pacheco, president of the El Salvador Union. At this meeting, Pastor Elmer Alférez was elected as president, Pastor Noé Colindres as secretary, and Brother Herberth Escobar, again as treasurer.¹⁰

As the experimental field became a mission and then a conference, it became necessary to reorganize the territory. On January 1 of 2008, new districts were created in order to meet the objectives of the Conference. The geographic zone which formed the Conference comprised of the districts of Chalatenango with its 33 subdivisions, La Libertad with its 22 subdivisions, and San Salvador with eight of its subdivisions.

In early 2000, the family of Sister Rosita de la O and her husband decided to help ECAS. Among the projects they took on was the beginning of the construction of a church, which was dedicated to God in 2016. They remodeled the rooms and the information laboratory.¹¹ In 2015, a bakery was built, and in 2018, a carpentry shop, with the help of the Swiss Foundation Verein Hilfswerk El Salvador.¹² The remodeling of the two wings of the women's and men's dormitory was carried out in 2018 thanks to Reach Out Ministries, and currently, the family of Brother Rich Uphus heads the valuable project of scholarships for students.¹³

Another school built in the territory of Central El Salvador Conference was the Quezaltepeque School. In 1997, it began its operations with 38 students and four pioneer teachers: Mercedes de Torres, Juana de Hernández, Sandra Canizalez, and Adriana Molina. In the years that followed, teachers Miriam de Argumedo and Cecilia Salinas joined the staff. The enrollment rose to 97 in 2000. Three years later, teacher Miriam de Argumedo was named Principal, and the school developed notably well. They were able to open a third cycle, enrollment rose to 357 students by

2005, the information laboratory was built, and by 2007, enrollment was more than 540 students.¹⁴

Later, another lot was acquired on which more classrooms and sports courts were constructed. In 2010, the school began to offer Middle School level grades. In 2016, Professor Armando Avila was named Principal, and since that date, there have been several new projects among which several stand out: a shop for electricity and robotics, roofing of bleachers, a cistern, construction of a gym space, and a technical electrician shop also sponsored by the Swiss Foundation Verein Hilfswerk El Salvador and other North American friends.¹⁵

In 2000, through efforts of Pastor Angel Amadeo Barrios and teacher Miriam Ester Sánchez, Santa Tecla Adventist School was opened with Ms. Sánchez as the Principal.¹⁶ It was accredited by the Ministry of Education of El Salvador in 2002 with the help of the Education Secretary of the Metropolitan El Salvador Conference (AMAS), Professor Rolando Morataya, and later that of Pastor Mauricio Aguilar. It began with Pre-school through Third grade, with 16 students; teacher Nancy Esther Rodríguez joined the staff after the school had operated in three different locations.¹⁶ Finally, a building on South 7th Avenue was rented, where the school functioned for nine years.

Brother Carlos Preza Marengo, originally from Santa Tecla and later a resident of Miami in the United States, got involved in the project. Thanks to his support, the school continued to evolve until 2016, when a property was purchased, but because of numerous difficulties, the property was then sold for a profit. With money from the sale of the property and the help of the administration of the Central El Salvador Conference and brother Preza, the purchase of a building was negotiated for the price of \$650,000. This building offered better advantages, and the school is currently in operation there.¹⁷

In 2013, Brother Gider Zelaya, treasurer of the Paracentral El Salvador Mission, got in contact with “Reach Out Ministries” inviting them to come to build churches in El Salvador.¹⁸ In September of that year, a group of missionaries arrived in Cojutepeque to look at the site where this ministry’s first church would be built. They arrived in March of 2014 to carry out the first construction project, and then in 2015, they committed to building 25 churches which were finished by the end of 2018, bringing the total to 26 churches.¹⁹ Because of their positive experience, they decided to come to other fields in El Salvador to build more churches, and it was in this way that they came to the Central El Salvador Conference. By 2019, they had built 25 churches there, and had plans to build five more. In addition, they rebuilt two sections of the dormitories in ECAS, one in the women’s dormitory and the other in the men’s dormitory; they repainted the entire school, put in sidewalks, bathrooms, remodeled the grounds and have given scholarships to nearly 80 on-campus students.²⁰

Between 2015 and 2019, 4,874 new members were added to the membership of the Conference.²¹ Every day new leaders are formed, the churches have become places for lay member training, and 14 pastors have accepted the challenge of training and evangelizing. The five educational institutions are growing in enrollment and staff, and have been transformed into centers for youth training. Small congregations²² meet in the homes of friends and neighbors, sharing the message of hope. Young people go out to evangelize and enter new places, and the leaders of the local churches have made a greater commitment to the growth of the church.

List of Presidents

Dany Perla, 2006-2007; Santos Cañas, 2007-2011; Elmer Omar Alfárez, 2011-2017; Abel Pacheco, 2017-interim; Mario Alberto Cruz, 2017- .

SOURCES

First Quadrennial Congress Administration, July 2008. Central El Salvador Mission, San Salvador, El Salvador.

Abdías Castro, R. G. (August 13, 2017). *White Center-UNADECA*. Accessed August 13, 2017, regarding the beginnings of the Adventist work in El Salvador. <https://ewhite.unadeca.net/index.php/es/article-category/investigaciones/historia-de-la-iglesia/el-salvador>.

1st Quadrennial Congress Administrative Report, 2008. Central El Salvador Mission Archives. San Salvador, El Salvador.

3rd Quadrennial Congress Administrative Committee, 2015. Central El Salvador Mission Archives. San Salvador.

Administrative Committee, July 25, 2005. Metropolitan El Salvador Conference, San Salvador:

Científicas, C. D. *Dimensions of Extreme Poverty in El Salvador* (Vol. 1) 1989. San Salvador, El Salvador.

Seventh-day Adventist Church, “Unión Salvadoreña—IAD,” Adventist Church Management System. Accessed July 23, 2019. www.acmsnet.org.

NOTES

- “Unión Salvadoreña—IAD,” *Adventist Church Management System*, accessed July 21, 2019, www.acmsnet.org?
2. “División Interamericana—IAD,” *Employee Record System*, accessed July 21, 2019. www.ers.interamerica.org?
 3. Antonio Rodríguez, interviewed by Mario Alberto Cruz Rivera and Alfonso Humberto Acosta Sánchez, Quezaltepeque, La Libertad, El Salvador, August 9, 2017.?
 4. 4 Salvador Acevedo, interviewed by Alfonso Acosta, San Juan Opico, La Libertad, June 15, 2019.?
 5. Herberth Escobar, interviewed by Alfonso Acosta, San Salvador, El Salvador, July 20, 2019.?
 6. Administrative Committee, November 24, 2005, Metropolitan Adventist El Salvador Conference Secretariat Archives.?
 7. Herberth Escobar, interviewed by Alfonso Acosta, San Salvador, El Salvador, July 20, 2019.?
 8. *Ibid.*?
 9. Alfonso Acosta, personal knowledge from working as a district pastor in the Central El Salvador Conference from 2014 until now.?
 10. *Ibid.*?
 11. Armando Avila, interviewed by Alfonso Acosta, Quezaltepeque, La Libertad, El Salvador, July 23, 2019.?
 12. Alfonso Acosta, personal knowledge from working as a district pastor in the Central El Salvador Conference from 2014 until now.?
 13. Miriam de Argumedo, interviewed by Alfonso Acosta, San Juan Opico, La Libertad, El Salvador, July 23, 2019.?
 14. Armando Avila, July 23, 2019.?
 15. Miriam Ester Sánchez, interviewed by Alfonso Acosta, San Fernando, California, July 23, 2019?
 16. *Ibid.*?
 17. Hugo Arévalo, interviewed by Alfonso Acosta, Santa Tecla, La Libertad, July 23, 2019.?
 18. Gridel Zelaya, interviewed by Alfonso Acosta, Cojutepeque, Cusactlán, El Salvador, July 23, 2019.?
 19. *Ibid.*?
 20. Alfonso Acosta, personal knowledge from working as Executive Secretary of the Central El Salvador Conference and member of the School Board of ECAS from 2018 until now.?
 21. Seventh-day Adventist Church, “Unión Salvadoreña—IAD,” *Adventist Church Management System*. www.acmsnet.org, accessed July 23, 2019.?
 22. Small Congregations is a specified number of church members who live in the same general geographic zone (neighborhoods, colonies, hamlets, cantons, etc.) and who get together one day a week to share the Word of God, preach, encourage one another, have fellowship, pray, sing and plan how to testify to and encourage the communities in which they live.?