



Central Minas Conference headquarters in 2015.

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# Central Minas Conference

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CLÁUDIO ANTÔNIO HIRLE LIMA, LEÔNIDAS VERNEQUE GUEDES, AND LUCAS VÍTOR ALVES RODRIGUES SENA

Cláudio Antônio Hirle Lima

Leônidas Verneque Guedes

Lucas Vítor Alves Rodrigues Sena

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The Central Minas Conference (Associação Mineira Central or AMC) is an administrative unit of the Seventh-day Adventist Church located in the territory of the Southeast Brazil Union Conference (União Sudeste Brasileira or USeB).

AMC is headquartered on 931 Portugal Avenue in the Santa Amélia neighborhood with Zip Code 31550-000 in the city of Belo Horizonte (BH), the capital of the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil.

The missionary territory of AMC covers the central region of the state of Minas Gerais and the metropolitan region of the city of Belo Horizonte. Its area of operation comprises 67 cities including 26 that do not have an Adventist presence. The estimated population in this territory is 6,063,583 inhabitants of whom 22,327 are Adventists. They are distributed in a total of 232 congregations with 122 churches and 110 groups. The average in the region is one Adventist per 271 people.<sup>1</sup>

In the AMC territory, three school units of the Adventist Educational Network are in operation. All of them are in Belo Horizonte, and together they serve 622 students. These are: Belo Horizonte Adventist Academy (Colégio Adventista de Belo Horizonte or CABH) with 481 students; Concórdia Adventist Academy (Colégio Adventista da Concórdia) with 117 students; and Pampulha Adventist Academy (Escola Adventista da Pampulha) with 24 students. The AMC also manages the Adventist Training and Recreation Center (Centro Adventista de Treinamento e Recreação or CATRE) with infrastructure for ecclesiastical and leisure activities. CATRE is located on 77 Abner Borja Street in the Braúnas neighborhood in the region of Contagem, and it has two auditoriums, a leisure area, including adult and children's swimming pools, male and female dorms, a restaurant with capacity for about 500 people, and an exclusive area for celebrating weddings.<sup>2</sup>

The open signal of Hope Channel Brazil (TV Novo Tempo) is available in some cities of the territory administered by the AMC: Belo Horizonte (channel 39), Betim (39), Ibirité (39), Mateus Leme (39), and Abaeté (36). In the metropolitan region of Belo Horizonte, around 7,000,000 people are potential viewers of TV Novo Tempo.<sup>3</sup> There are many fronts of missionary activity, and to meet the needs of the members, the Conference maintains at its service a total of 213 employees: 157 employees, 47 credentialed workers, and nine licensed workers. In addition, 48 pastors serve the Church in Central Minas Conference, of which 41 are accredited and seven are licensed.<sup>4</sup>

## The Origin of the Work in the Conference Territory

The Adventist message arrived in Minas Gerais in 1896<sup>5</sup> through the work of brethren Alberto and Frederico Berger in the eastern area of the state. However, efforts to reach the central region were only begun in the early 1910s. During the organizational meeting of the Brazil Union Conference (União Brasileira, presently the Central Brazil Union Conference (União Central Brasileira), the delegates present also decided to use the offerings of 1911 to support a worker in Minas Gerais. At the time, the state had a population of 4,000,000 people.<sup>6</sup> In January 1911, canvassers<sup>7</sup> Germano Conrad and Emílio Froemming arrived in Minas. Their work started in the city of Juiz de Fora and, shortly thereafter, they traveled through the region on the Leopoldina Railway, and that route went through the south of the state. In that region, the canvassers visited cities with about 4,000 and 6,000 inhabitants and reported that they would go to Belo Horizonte.<sup>8</sup>

Little by little, other workers were sent to Minas Gerais. In 1914, for example, canvasser Maria Kroeker worked in Belo Horizonte and sold many missionary books there. She can be considered the first canvasser to work in

the capital of Minas Gerais.<sup>9</sup> It was Mrs. Kroeker who started the first Sabbath School in that city.<sup>10</sup> She was Pastor Jacob Kroeker's wife, and the couple had moved from the state of Paraná to Minas Gerais between 1912 and 1914. They were the first Adventists to live in Belo Horizonte. While Maria canvassed, her husband taught English classes.<sup>11</sup>

The Kroeker couple continued to work in Belo Horizonte along with workers Cyriaco Leite and Joaquim Porto.<sup>12</sup> By mid-1918, there were already some people interested in the Adventist message, and in August, three women were baptized by Pastor Clarence Rentfro. In December, Rentfro baptized another 12 people: seven in the city of Ibirité, a couple in the city of Sarzedo, and three others in the capital. In addition to the baptisms, two more people were welcomed into the new Adventist group through baptismal vote. Adding to all the new converts, this region already had 17 members.<sup>13</sup>

In 1919, worker Gustavo Storch was called to work in Belo Horizonte. At that time, there were Sabbath Schools classes both in the capital with 10 members, and in Sarzedo and Ibirité with eight and three members, respectively. There were 21 Adventists in the metropolitan area.<sup>14</sup> The following year, Storch was sent to work in another region, and worker Luiz Nabuco took his place. There were difficulties in his way, but he kept going. Five people were baptized, and one of them was the result of a meeting held in Serra dos Macacos [The Mountain of Monkeys] and the other four in the city of Brumadinho.<sup>15</sup> In 1921, Pastor Clarence Rentfro carried out the first series of meetings in Belo Horizonte in a hall on João Pinheiro Avenue. His commitment, along with that of the other workers, resulted in the growth of the Adventist group in that location.<sup>16</sup>

In the 1930s, work in the capital gained a new lease of life. In March 1930, Pastor José dos Passos was sent to work in Belo Horizonte, and he started a series of evangelistic meetings there. Passos arrived in the city amid great political turmoil. The 1930 Revolution had just broken out,<sup>17</sup> and the home of Passos family was located between the battalions of the Military Police of Minas Gerais and the barracks of the 12th Infantry Regiment of the Brazilian Army.<sup>18</sup> Even amidst the political turmoil, the evangelistic work continued, and in February 1931, eight people were baptized in the Arrudas River.<sup>19</sup>

The year 1932 brought good achievements for Adventist work in the capital of Minas Gerais. Until May of that year, Pastor José dos Passos baptized 22 people, 15 of whom were the result of the series of meetings held in the previous year.<sup>20</sup> Among those baptized on this occasion was a woman named Cipriana Mendes from the city of Montes Claros in northern Minas Gerais. After her baptism, she returned to her home city where she began to distribute Adventist literature. Thus, Cipriana can be considered the first Adventist known in Montes Claros.<sup>21</sup>

On February 24, 1932, the first Adventist chapel in Belo Horizonte was inaugurated.<sup>22</sup> The land where the chapel was built was donated by Brother Manoel Sousa.<sup>23</sup> Also on that date, worker Daniel Féder arrived in BH [Belo Horizonte] to help José dos Passos in the work of evangelization,<sup>24</sup> and together with pastors Braun and Passos, he started a series of meetings.<sup>25</sup> Within March and April 1933, Féder carried out a new evangelistic series in the Santa Tereza neighborhood, and they resulted in new Bible students and another 30 people baptized.<sup>26</sup> Finally,

on June 10, 1933, the congregation that met in the Concórdia neighborhood, considered to be outside the city,<sup>27</sup> was organized into a church.<sup>28</sup>

Adventists in BH were so missionary minded that in 1934, the congregation organized the “Liga Disseminadora da Verdade” [Truth Spreading League], and its purpose was to encourage church members to become even more involved in the preaching of the Gospel. Worker Daniel Féder had high expectations for the church that year.<sup>29</sup> However, at the beginning of the following year, 1935, Féder was sent to Rio de Janeiro to receive medical treatment. In order to continue the work, the Rio Minas Mission (Missão Rio Minas, presently called the Rio de Janeiro Conference [Associação Rio de Janeiro ] sent Pastor Luiz Braun.<sup>30</sup> Even though he arrived in early 1935, Braun stayed for only a year in the capital of Minas Gerais. In early 1936, he and his wife were sent to the city of Caxambu in the south of Minas Gerais due to their health conditions.<sup>31</sup> It was believed that the urban and climatic conditions of Belo Horizonte contributed to workers having to leave the city so quickly.<sup>32</sup>

In 1936, Rio Minas Mission sent the then-president of the field, Pastor Gustavo Storch, who had already been ordained, to hold a series of meetings in Belo Horizonte. The main purpose of the meetings was to build an Adventist church in the central region of the city. Thus, the Mission rented the Spanish Guild hall near the city center<sup>33</sup> for three months, and evangelism took place there four times a week.<sup>34</sup> Storch was also being helped by Bible instructor Manoel Ost,<sup>35</sup> who had been transferred to the capital along with the Mission president to “prepare the field for the meetings.”<sup>36</sup>

In late 1937, Gustavo Storch organized the second church in Belo Horizonte.<sup>37</sup> In the same year, an Adventist elementary school also started to operate in the city. The first teacher at the institution was Nair Cunha, and in July 1938, there were already 39 students enrolled. The Belo Horizonte school was considered the largest in the mission field at the time.<sup>38</sup> And so the work kept growing in the capital of Minas Gerais. The many missionary fronts and the resulting achievements collaborated so that, in December 1939, the Rio-Minas Mission reached a total of 1,280 Adventist members and 12 organized churches.<sup>39</sup>

In June 1942, the negotiations for the construction of Belo Horizonte Central Church definitively began. During that period, pastors H. O. Olson, secretary of the South American Division (Divisão Sul-Americana or JSAD), and John Brown, president of the East Brazil Union Conference (União Este Brasileira or UEB), now called the Southeast Brazil Union Conference ( [União Sudeste Brasileira or USEB]) visited Belo Horizonte. The purpose of this visit was to help Pastor Guilherme Ebinger, who was taking care of the two congregations in operation in the capital, to find land where they could build the new church.<sup>40</sup> At the time, the Brethren met in a rented two-story hall on Bias Fortes Avenue. The church operated on the ground floor, and on the first floor was a nightclub that only opened on weekends. During the week, the first floor also housed the church’s elementary school. During Sunday night services, the noise of the nightclub could be heard, and that impaired worship. Despite the unfavorable conditions to worship, Adventists continued to work in the capital. Finally, on April 30, 1947, Belo Horizonte Central Church was inaugurated. The temple was on Bias Fortes Avenue, and it was close to the hall

previously used for services.<sup>41</sup>

In 1951, there were 290 Adventists in Belo Horizonte, with 200 in the Central Church and 90 in the Concórdia Church.<sup>42</sup> In the following year, in December 1952, there was already a Dorcas Society in the Central Church working actively to distribute clothes, food, and toys to needy families.<sup>43</sup> Three years later, in August 1955, the Progresso Adventist Church was also inaugurated in Belo Horizonte. It was built with capital resources from Álvaro Stehling, an Adventist who had been baptized in 1953 and was financially secure enough to contribute. After being healed of a serious illness, Stehling put his efforts into building the auditorium. It was inaugurated in 1955, and it had a capacity of 250 people. On the same day of the inauguration, a series of meetings began in the auditorium, then called the “Progresso Cultural Hall” (“Salão Cultural Progresso”). As a result of this and other meetings held there, many people were baptized the following year.<sup>44</sup>

## The Conference Organizational History

In 1955, the East Brazil Union Conference (União Este Brasileira) promoted a geographical and administrative reorganization in its mission field. As a result, the Minas Mission was established, and it was headquartered on 254 Padre Belchior Street in Belo Horizonte. The goal of the new Mission was to serve the growing number of Adventists and expand preaching in their area of missionary activity that then covered the central and northern regions of the state at that time. There were 6,000,000 inhabitants in that region, and 518 were Adventists who congregated in four churches. Pastor Silas Gianini was appointed as the first president of the new administrative unit.<sup>45</sup>

In the first years after its establishment, the Mission developed more methods of evangelism. In one of them, Pastor Enoch de Oliveira used the auditorium of the Dantés Building in downtown Belo Horizonte. At the end of the series, there were 20 Sabbathkeepers and about 100 people preparing for baptism,<sup>46</sup> which took place in July 1957.<sup>47</sup> With evangelistic efforts intensified, the Mission ended the 1950s with 12 organized churches and 1,591 Adventist churches,<sup>48</sup> a number three times greater than the existing number at the time of its establishment.

In 1961, the region of Belo Horizonte started to have four organized churches. The fourth was inaugurated in the city of Nova Lima.<sup>49</sup> In January 1965, Minas Mission held its 5th Biennial Assembly in Belo Horizonte, and reports indicated there was a total of 14 organized churches and 2,993 members.<sup>50</sup> In 1964, 548 people had been baptized in the Mission’s territory,<sup>51</sup> exceeding the original target of 450.<sup>52</sup> This growth was reflected in the number of churches in the capital, which rose from four to 12 congregations by March 1965. In the same year, Minas Mission received a donation of land in the city of Betim for the construction of a church.<sup>53</sup> Also in April 1965, the Jardim Montanhês Church was organized in the capital of Minas Gerais. The congregation was the fruit of the project “The Voice of Youth” (“A Voz da Mocidade”).<sup>54</sup> As a result of the development of Adventism in this field, by January 1966, BH had more than 15 congregations.<sup>55</sup>

The year 1966 was one for great mobilization for the Adventist church in the capital region. At the beginning of that year, the Luminary Medical-Dental Clinic (Clínica Médico-Dentária Luminar) started operating on São Vicente Street in the Vila São Francisco neighborhood in Belo Horizonte. In March 1966, about 40 people were served daily at that clinic.<sup>56</sup> Along with the Clinic, the Colorado Educational and Recreation Center (Centro de Educação, Assistência e Recreio Colorado) was also inaugurated on Santa Margarida Street in the same neighborhood. In Colorado Center, the Colorado Kindergarten started to operate with 70 children initially enrolled.<sup>57</sup> Still in 1966, Minas Mission held the first “How to Quit Smoking in Five Days” (“Como Deixar de Fumar em Cinco Dias”)[ course. The project was widely publicized in the capital’s media, and it was carried out by physicians Ajax Walter da Silveira and Gideon de Oliveira.<sup>58</sup> As a result of the efforts made in that year, at the end of 1967, the metropolitan region of Belo Horizonte alone had four pastoral districts.<sup>59</sup>

In 1968, the SDA Church’s administrative units in Minas Gerais underwent a geographic reorganization. Minas Mission began to cover the Minas Triangle region previously served by the Central Brazil Mission] (Missão Brasil Central, now [ called the Central Brazil Conference). The Upper São Francisco Mission (Missão do Alto São Francisco) was also created, and it consisted of the northern region of the state that was separated from Minas Mission.<sup>60</sup> Finally, after an intense decade of activities, Minas Mission had 17 organized churches and 4,956 members in January 1970. As of that year, the Mission’s office started to operate on 2900 São Vicente Street (presently named Estoril Street) in the Vila São Francisco neighborhood also in the capital of Minas Gerais.<sup>61</sup> At the end of that year, the Upper São Francisco Mission was ended, and its territory was incorporated into Minas Mission.<sup>62</sup>

In September 1971, the Mission started a sequence of six series of meetings in a mobile auditorium in the city of Belo Horizonte.<sup>63</sup> About 1,000 people regularly attended those meetings that were led by Pastor José M. Vianna, the UEB evangelist.<sup>64</sup> Also in 1971, the report of the Biennial Assembly of the Mission showed that the field had an increase in the number of members from 4,863 in 1969 to 5,440 in the late 1970s, and there were 577 baptisms performed by the end of this last year.<sup>65</sup> The initiatives also continued to have results in the educational arena.

In 1972, Colorado Academy (Educandário Colorado) was in full operation. The school unit that operated at Colorado Educational and Recreation Center started to offer the fifth grade of elementary school with 50 students enrolled.<sup>66</sup> At the end of 1973, the school began to offered the seventh grade, and it included teaching both the basic subjects of the Brazilian school curriculum and several specific subjects, among them Home Education (Educação do Lar). In all, 10 teachers made up the school’s teaching team.<sup>67</sup> In the following year (1974), the school became to be known as the Colorado Adventist Academy (Instituto Adventista Colorado []), and it provided education up to 8th grade.<sup>68</sup>

From 1973 onwards, the field’s leadership encouraged the believers of Belo Horizonte to gather in caravans. The purpose of these caravans was to evangelize cities yet unreached by the Adventist message. A special emphasis

should be given to the cities of Divinópolis and Sete Lagoas, both important regional centers that were indeed reached by this bold evangelistic project.<sup>69</sup> During that period, the medical missionary front also achieved great development. In 1975, the Adventist Medical Missionary Clinic (Clínica Médica Missionária Adventista) was inaugurated in the São Francisco neighborhood in Belo Horizonte. Its director was physician Isaque de Paula, who also served patients in the health unit from 8 am to 6:30 pm. Armando de Paula was the dentist at the clinic, and it still had an analysis laboratory and a nurse.<sup>70</sup>

The years 1976 and 1977 were marked by a great evangelistic work called the “Open Bibles” (“Bíblias Abertas”) operation that consisted of a series of meetings whose only study material was the Holy Bible. Just in 1976 alone, around 1,000 people were baptized as a result of this project. The target was 1,000 baptized people for 1977. The action had the direct engagement of the field leadership. Pastor Paulo Stabenow, then president of the Mission, and Pastor Alcy Oliveira, secretary-treasurer, also directed the series at the Belo Horizonte Central Church, and it was already on Timbiras Street and at the Concórdia Church.<sup>71</sup>

Still in 1977, a humanitarian initiative that bore fruit in Minas Mission was the course “How to Quit Smoking in Five Days” (“Como Deixar de Fumar em Cinco Dias”), and it was attended by 300 students and took place in the Aparecida neighborhood in the capital of Minas Gerais. It served as the preparation for an evangelistic series.<sup>72</sup> That series was very fruitful and, at the end of November 1977, it contributed to Minas Mission reaching the target of 1,000 baptisms that year.<sup>73</sup> The evangelistic series continued in 1978. In August, Pastor José Miranda, the Mission’s evangelist, started an evangelism series in Sete Lagoas, 50 km away from Belo Horizonte.<sup>74</sup> As a result, 80 people were baptized,<sup>75</sup> and in the late 1970s, the Mission already served 37 congregations with 12,639 Adventists<sup>76</sup> who were spread across 25 pastoral districts. Among the churches that were organized that decade are those in the city of Betim and in the district of Venda Nova in the metropolitan region of Belo Horizonte in addition to the inauguration of the new Belo Horizonte Central Church in 1979.<sup>77</sup>

From 1980, Adventist education in the region of the Mission advanced with the establishment of the first educational units in the cities of Montes Claros and Uberlândia in addition to the inauguration of others in Belo Horizonte.<sup>78</sup> The growth of the work, seen on many fronts, was a reflection of the work proposal of the field leadership, who had the motto of “Minas for Minas inhabitants” (“Minas para os mineiros”). This motto became a reality in 1980 when the East Brazil Union Mission promoted a reorganization in its territory. With this change, the mission field of Minas Gerais, until then served by Minas Mission and by the Rio Minas Conference (Associação Rio Minas, presently called the Rio de Janeiro Conference [Associação Rio de Janeiro]), and by the East Conference (Associação Leste, now called the Espírito Santo Conference [Associação Espírito-Santense], started to be assisted only by Minas Mission that was headquartered in Belo Horizonte.<sup>79</sup>

Still in 1980, the Mission purchased 147 hectares of land in the city of Lavras, about 240 km away from the capital. The Minas Gerais Adventist Academy (Instituto Adventista de Ensino de Minas Gerais or IAEMG), these days called the Minas Gerais Adventist College [Faculdade Adventista de Minas Gerais [ or FADMINAS] was built

on this place.<sup>80</sup> The first director of the boarding school was Pastor Hermínio Vitorino Andrade. When the school started operating in 1981, there were 40 students enrolled in elementary school education through an adult education program. During the day, they used to work, and at night, they would attend the classes.<sup>81</sup> This college has contributed a lot to the development of Adventist education in Minas.

The work in the health area also made progress at that time. In 1980, the Golden Cross Insurance Company that belonged to the Brazilian Adventist businessman Milton Afonso purchased the Santa Mônica Hospital (Hospital Santa Mônica) in Belo Horizonte. The following year, Golden Cross handed over the hospital's management to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Belo Horizonte Hospital (Belo Horizonte) as it became known, started to be managed by the Brazil Adventist Hospital Group (Grupo Hospitalar Adventista do Brasil or GHAB) under the responsibility of Minas Mission. Pastor Zeferino Stabenow was appointed to direct the hospital.<sup>82</sup>

The years 1982 and 1983 inaugurated a new phase for Minas Mission. In July 1982, the South American Division approved the UEB's request and decided to reorganize Minas Mission in two new fields: the Central Minas Mission (Missão Mineira Central or MMC) headquartered in Belo Horizonte, and the South Minas Mission (Missão Mineira Sul, presently named the South Minas Conference [Associação Mineira Sul]) headquartered in Juiz de Fora.<sup>83</sup> The reorganization took effect from January 1, 1983, with the last Triennial Assembly of Minas Mission. At the time of its reorganization, the Central Minas Mission began to serve 17,235 Adventists distributed in 280 congregations. The Mission also administered the Belo Horizonte Hospital in addition to nine elementary schools. Another decision made at the Triennial was that the IAEMG should be administered jointly by the two fields.<sup>84</sup>

During the 1980s, the radio program "The Voice of Prophecy" ("A Voz da Profecia")<sup>85</sup> was an important tool for evangelistic progress in the MMC. The Bible courses taught by the program bore many fruits in Minas Gerais. After the courses were offered, 400 people began to study the Bible in the city of Carmo do Paranaíba where there were no Adventists. From September to December 1985, about 3,000 people taking the Bible courses in the program were served in person by the Central Minas Mission.<sup>86</sup> At the end of 1984, thanks to the good performance in the evangelistic project "A Thousand Days of Harvest" ("Mil Dias de Colheita"),<sup>87</sup> the Central Minas Mission registered a total of 20,506 Adventist members.<sup>88</sup> In early 1986, the Mission reported 1,613 baptisms within 1984 and 1986 with a high average of baptisms per day.<sup>89</sup>

In March 1989, Central Minas Mission started operating on 911 Portugal Avenue in the Pampulha neighborhood in Belo Horizonte. That year, the administrative unit served 25,000 members spread across 279 congregations and 39 pastoral districts. The MMC office had 70 employees to serve Adventists in the region. According to the report of the inauguration, in 1988, about 2,000 people were baptized in that territory, and the leadership of the field already estimated that they would add 3.4 thousand new converts for the next year. On the same occasion as the inauguration, the cornerstone of the Belo Horizonte Adventist Educational Center (Centro Educacional Adventista de Belo Horizonte) was laid.<sup>90</sup>



In the 1990s, the MMC decided to invest in Global Mission<sup>91</sup> since there were still 228 cities with no Adventist presence in the field. A series of evangelistic meetings and Bible courses were held in cities such as Araçuaí, Dolores do Indaiá, Lagoa da Prata, Unai, and Cachoeira Dourada, among others.<sup>92</sup> In 1991, the Central Minas Mission had its status changed to Central Minas Conference (Associação Mineira Central or AMC).<sup>93</sup> This change took place during the Assembly of the Mission between February 20 and 23 in 1991. That year, the Mission's statistical reports showed the number of 26,709 Adventist members were spread across 300 congregations and 37 pastoral districts.<sup>94</sup>

Two years later, in 1993, the Conference reached the mark of 111 organized churches as well as many groups. Furthermore, the number of members increased to 33,000. Baptism estimates for 1994 were approximately 4,000 new converts.<sup>95</sup> The growth was also reflected in the planting of churches that took place in the cities of Felisburgo and Rio Pardo de Minas, and in the Califórnia neighborhood in Belo Horizonte.<sup>96</sup> In addition, in 1994, a series of meetings was held in the cities of Montes Claros and Formiga in addition to the establishment of a pastoral district in the city of Salinas in northern Minas Gerais. With all these efforts, there were 3,267 people baptized in 1994.<sup>97</sup>

In 1995, the Central Minas Conference leadership decided to renovate the (Luminary II medical missionary launch) lancha médico-missionária Luminar II [], and it served the population of the São Francisco River region in northern Minas Gerais. The renovation was carried out with financial resources that came from the Ingathering and the support from São Francisco Shipping Company and Pirapora City Hall. In addition to the medical missionary launch, the AMC also acquired a medical-dental clinic with the contribution of Golden Cross. The purpose of the mobile clinic was to aid Dorcas societies (presently named Adventist Solidarity Action (Ação Solidária Adventista or ASA) in all cities covered by the Conference, offering courses on healthy eating, making sure your living area was sanitary, cutting and sewing, and other activities.<sup>98</sup>

At the end of 1996, the AMC showed substantial growth. The reports presented at its 16th Triennial Assembly held in December of that year showed that there were 35,920 members in the field<sup>99</sup> organized into 401 congregations and 45 pastoral districts. From 1994 to 1996, there was an increase of 9,460 members with many of them living in 58 regions previously without any Adventists. In all, net growth was 17 percent. In addition to the growth in the amount of members, progress was accomplished in the educational area. The Ipatinga Adventist Academy {Colégio Adventista de Ipatinga or CADl) was built with 16 classrooms offering from pre-school to high school plus a technical course in Data Processing. In the same period, Belo Horizonte Adventist Academy was completely renovated and started to offer high school. Another achievement was the purchase of land in the Pampulha neighborhood in Belo Horizonte for the construction of a training center.<sup>100</sup>

In the same Assembly, one of the plans presented was to establish Adventist families in places with no previous Adventist presence.<sup>101</sup> One of these cities was São Domingos do Prata, and it was 140 km away from Belo Horizonte where an Adventist family from the city of Sorocaba (SP) moved. In October 1998, an Adventist church

with 37 members had already been established there.<sup>102</sup> With all missionary efforts, the AMC reached the mark of 38,899 Seventh-day Adventists, in January 2000.<sup>103</sup> The growth of the field led to another reorganization of the territory on November 16, 2000, when the UEB decided to create the East Minas Conference (Associação Mineira Leste or AML), headquartered in the city of Governador Valadares.<sup>104</sup> Its territory, separated from the AMC and South Minas Conference (AMS), comprised the eastern region of Minas Gerais. The new field started its activities with 14,489 Adventists.

With the continuous development of the work in the entire mission field of Minas Gerais, in the 2010s, a possible reorganization started to be planned. After several plans, in 2012, the AMC underwent another geographical and administrative change. This time, the Northern region of Minas Gerais was separated from the Conference, and it became a new administrative unit: East Minas Conference (Missão Mineira Norte [East Minas Conference or MMN) headquartered in the city of Montes Claros. At the time of its establishment on January 1, 2013, the new Mission had 11,648 members.<sup>105</sup> With new developments, another reorganization took place five years later. In 2018, the Conference underwent its most recent administrative change when the territory of western Minas Gerais and the Minas Triangle was separated from the field, and they formed the “West Minas Mission” (“Missão Mineira Oeste or MMO). The new field, which began operating on December 1, 2019, is headquartered in the city of Uberlândia and serves 12,248 Adventists in the region.<sup>106</sup>

In fulfilling their evangelistic mission, Adventists in the central region of Minas Gerais have also dedicated themselves to welfare work. For example, in January 2019, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency International (Agência Adventista de Desenvolvimento e Recursos Assistenciais or ADRA) directly assisted in medical, psychological, and humanitarian services to victims of the disruption of an ore tailings dam in the city of Brumadinho in Minas Gerais.<sup>107</sup> ADRA in Belo Horizonte also received Venezuelan refugees. In September 2019, in partnership with the United States government, the Agency brought from Boa Vista, in the state of Roraima, two Venezuelan families who were living in a refugee camp. In Belo Horizonte, work and housing were provided for these two families.<sup>108</sup>

In every possible way, since the establishment of the AMC, Adventists from this field have been engaged in many missionary projects, both at local and regional levels. One of these projects is the “Adventist Development and Relief Agency International’ (“Rota do Poder” or Route of Power) in which a caravan of pastors and musicians travel through several cities in the countryside for eight days while holding evangelistic meetings. The project started in 2007 and reached several locations. In the city of Betim, for example, 10,000 people attended the meeting at Newton Amaral Municipal Stadium, and it resulted in 37 baptisms. And in CATRE in the city of Contagem another 5,000 people participated in the evangelistic activities, many of whom decided for Christ.<sup>109</sup> Another project of great impact that has been carried out at the AMC is Hope Impact (Impacto Esperança,<sup>110</sup> an initiative developed throughout the SAD territory. In 2019, 1.3 million books were distributed in the state of Minas Gerais, and 300,000 were delivered in the central region of Belo Horizonte. On Square 7, one of the

busiest in the city, Adventists set up the “Hope Cash Machine” or “Caixa Eletrônico da Esperança. Pedestrians passing by the place received a “credit card,” and when inserting it in a kind of cash machine, they received the book “Hope for the Family” “Esperança Para a Família” [ instead of money.<sup>111</sup> Employees of the AMC headquarters also participated in the project by distributing the missionary book in the Lagoa da Pampulha region in the capital of Minas Gerais.<sup>112</sup>

In the last two years, there have been two important inaugurations in the AMC territory. The first took place in November 2019 when the metropolitan region of Belo Horizonte began to be covered by Hope Channel Brazil (TV Novo Tempo open channel. Its potential to reach is of 7,000,000 million people, who live in the capital and in neighboring cities.<sup>113</sup> The second achievement was the inauguration of the Escola Adventista da Pampulha [Pampulha Adventist Academy], in February 2020, in the Santa Amélia neighborhood also in the capital of Minas Gerais. Since its inauguration, the school has offered classes for Early Childhood Education and, from 2021, it will also offer Elementary and High School Education.<sup>114</sup>

Since its founding as Minas Mission in 1955, the AMC has contributed a lot to the establishment and growth of the Adventist Church in the state of Minas Gerais. This reality can be seen in the missionary initiatives carried out on several fronts, such as in the educational, health and assistance areas, and especially in evangelistic projects with a high missionary impact. Those were efforts that contributed to the conversion of thousands of people. In this context, projects, goals, actions and resources have become important means of reaching people. These instruments, associated with the direct and tireless work of pioneers, pastors, workers and lay members, have helped the Adventist Church in this region to continue advancing successfully in its mission to preach the Eternal Gospel so that more lives are gained for the Kingdom of Christ.

## Chronology of Administrative Leaders<sup>115</sup>

Presidents: Silas Gianini (1955-1957); R. A. Wilcox (1957); José Jeremias de Oliveira (1958); Harald Jackson Harris (1958); Edson Vasconcellos (1958-1960); Emmanuel Zorub (1960-1962); Manoel Ost (1962); Harry Emílio Bergold (1963); Cláudio Chagas Belz (1964-1969); Robert Leonard Heisler (1969-1974); Paulo Stabenow (1974-1983); Darcy dos Reis (1983-1991); Antônio Ribeiro de Oliveira (1991); Kleber Pereira dos Reis (1991-1992); Izéas dos Santos Cardoso (1992-1995); Marcos Osmar Schultz (1995-2002); Ursulino Viana Freitas (2002-2012); José Marcos Nunes de Oliveira (2012-Present).

Secretaries: Werner Bleck (1955-1958); Harry Emílio Bergold (1958-1962); Arnaldo Benedicto Christianini (1962-1967); Rony Lopes (1967-1971); W. E. Conrado (1971-1974); A. F. Oliveira (1974-1978); Luiz Henrique Perestrelo (1978-1980); José Miranda Rocha (1980-1983); Severino Bezerra de Oliveira (1986-1988); José Elias Zanotelli (1988-1991); Antônio Ribeiro de Oliveira (1991-1994); Marcos Osmar Schultz (1994-1995); Eurípedes Vieira Carvalho (1996-2001); Ursulino Viana Freitas (2001-2002); Marcos Moreira Nardy (2003-2005); José Marcos Nunes de Oliveira (2005-2012); Claudiney Cândido dos Santos (2013-2015); Cláudio Antônio Hirle Lima (2015-

Present).

Treasurers: Werner Bleck (1955-1958); Harry Emílio Bergold (1958-1962); Arnaldo Benedicto Christianini (1962-1967); Rony Lopes (1967-1971); W.E. Conrado (1971-1974); A.F. Oliveira (1974-1978); Luiz Henrique Perestrelo (1978-1982); Zilton Kruger (1982-1984); Pedro Ferreira Lima (1984-2005); Daniel Lopes Toledo (2005-2011); Eliezer Wesley de Magalhães (2011-2016); Silvânio Zahn (2016-Present).<sup>116</sup>

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## NOTES

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2. Renata Paes, “Escola Adventista da Pampulha recebe matrículas” [“Pampulha Adventist Academy receives enrollment:”], Notícias Adventistas [Adventist News], October 18, 2019, accessed December 12, 2019, <https://bit.ly/34dqMtX>; Josiane Marylyn (Assistant of AMC Executive Secretary), WhatsApp message to Lucas Rodrigues (ESDA assistant writer), July 17, 2020.
3. Renata Paes, “TV Novo Tempo alcançará quase 7 milhões de pessoas na Grande BH” [“Hope Channel Brazil will reach almost 7 million people in Greater BH”], Notícias Adventistas [Adventist News], November 7, 2019, accessed January 7, 2020, <http://bit.ly/2Qvm7Qk>.
4. Josiane Marylyn (Assistant of AMC Executive Secretary), WhatsApp message to Lucas Rodrigues, July 17, 2020.
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116. For more information about the Central Minas Conference, you can access the website <https://amc.adventistas.org/> or their social media on Facebook: AdventistasUai; Instagram: @adventistasuai; YouTube: Adventistas UAI; and the Adventistas UAI mobile app available on the Google Play Store.

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