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# Mexico

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## FÉLIX CORTÉS ANTONIO

Félix Cortés Antonio was born in the south of Mexico. His parents were Sebastián Cortés Salinas and María Antonio Rodríguez. He married Catalina Elizabeth Valles, and they have three grown sons. Both dedicated their lives to the service of God for 42 years. She was a nurse and teacher, and he was a pastor, administrator and editor. He has written 12 books, five of which are sold by colporteurs. They retired in 2007.

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Mexico is a country that is situated at the southern end of North America. In 1899 the General Conference sent a group of missionaries, under the leadership of Pastor G. W. Caviness, to Mexico City to establish the work of the

Adventist Church in the capital of the republic.

## Territory and Statistics

The Seventh-day Adventist Mexican Union was organized in 1923 as the Aztec Union Mission and reorganized in 1926 as the Mexican Union Mission, with 29 churches and 629 members. At that time Mexico had a population of 15,582,422. In 2020, when Mexico has 126,577,691 inhabitants, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has the following organizational structure in Mexico for the purpose of proclaiming the gospel throughout the country:

Administrative Bodies: five unions, 30 conferences, 12 missions, one publishing house, 50 bookstores, five health institutions, and 26 camps.

Membership: 778,051 members and 7,033 churches and groups.

Personnel: 652 ordained ministers, 468 licensed ministers, 1,931 teachers, and 865 colporteurs.

Educational Institutions: 142 elementary schools, 103 secondary schools, 68 preparatory schools, and four universities.

The five Seventh-day Adventist unions that exist in Mexico operate under established guidelines in order to manage all the affairs of the church in their territory. With the purpose of coordinating all the affairs of the church that are related to the Mexican government, the Inter-American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, in a meeting held on February 12, 2020, created a legal entity that is called the Seventh-day Adventist Church of Mexico. Its function is to coordinate all the legal, fiscal, and financial matters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mexico.

## Overview

Mexico is a country that is situated at the southern end of North America. Mexico's territory, without counting its islands and territorial seas, covers a surface of approximately 1,964,375 square kilometers, which puts it 14<sup>th</sup> in the world and fifth in America, after Canada, the United States, Brazil, and Argentina.<sup>1</sup>

Mexico has an eastern coast bathed by the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea, which form part of the Atlantic Ocean. On the west, it has an enormous coastline bathed by the Pacific Ocean. It has 11,122 kilometers of coastline (without including the islands). The territorial seas of Mexico extend out 25 kilometers from the coastline, and the exclusive economic marine zone goes out 200 nautical miles from the coast. The sea surface controlled by Mexico is of 2.7 million kilometers. Mexico is bordered on the north by the United States (3,152 kilometers) and on the south by Central America, specifically Guatemala and Belize (1,149 km)<sup>2</sup> Eighty-five percent of Mexico's territory is formed by mountain chains, mesas, and numerous valleys. The Sierra Madre Occidental and the Sierra Madre Oriental run parallel to the coasts. Between them is a vast region of valleys, high plateaus, and mesas (average altitude of 2000 meters). At the extreme south of the plateau there are the highest peaks in Mexico: Orizaba or Citlatépetl, Popocatepetl, and Iztaccihuatl.

Mexico's inhabitants are very diverse, but they share, among other things, the land, the language, and the customs of the country. Mexico's population is 126,577,691, the largest among countries that speak Spanish, the second in Latin America behind Brazil, and eleventh in the world.<sup>3</sup>

Human habitation of Mexico is wrapped in the mystery of a legend. The Aztecs, a warrior tribe that came from a mythical place called Aztlán, invaded the inhabitants of the high plateau of the country in mid fifteenth century, and they built a centralized empire called Mexica. In general, the name Aztec has been given to all the inhabitants of the territory conquered by Hernán Cortés rather than to only the actual members of the Aztec tribe.<sup>4</sup>

The Aztecs spoke the Náhuatl language and had a system of writing that mixed pictograms, ideograms, and phonetic symbols. Some of the codices have survived to this day. The codex known as the "Código Borbónico" was written prior to the arrival of the Spaniards. The Aztecs ruled the central region of Mexico when the Spaniards arrived.

The Spanish conquest began in 1519 with the arrival of Hernán Cortés. In May of 1519, Hernán Cortés founded the Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz (today simply Veracruz), which was the first establishment of the Spaniards in Mexico. The Tlatoani or king of the Aztecs sent gifts to the invaders with the hope that they would then re-embark, but Hernán Cortés decided to enter further into the country. He attacked, set siege to, and took the city of Tenochtitlán in November of 1519, taking possession of the Aztec Empire. In this way the political conquest took place. The spiritual conquest began the next year with the arrival of three Franciscan monks under the command of Pedro de Gante. The Dominicans arrived in 1526 and the Jesuits in 1572.<sup>5</sup>

The domination of the Spaniards lasted three hundred years, and then came the war of independence, which ended in 1824 with the establishment of the Republic of Mexico.<sup>6</sup> The wars of independence, reform, and revolution were the great political-military movements that led to the establishment of the Mexican nation and which define modern Mexico. Politically, Mexico is divided into 31 federal entities or states.

The economy of Mexico is based on a free market oriented toward exportation. It is the largest economy of Spanish-speaking America, the second in Latin America, and the third largest economy on the American continent, following only that of the United States and of Brazil.<sup>7</sup> Its economy is largely based on exportation and conducts business with

more than forty countries, including the European Union, Japan, Israel, and various countries from Central and South America.<sup>8</sup> With a population of almost 130 million, a rich and diverse cultural history, a favorable geography, and abundant natural resources, Mexico has the 11<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world. The country has solid macroeconomic institutions, is open to foreign commerce, and private investment. The Mexican authorities have implemented stable and sustainable fiscal and monetary policies, making the peso the most coveted emerging currency. Currently it is fifteenth in the world in exporting goods, as it has strengthened its production capacity in the more complex sectors, rather than relying solely on primary materials such as oil, and is concentrating on manufactured products that are integrated into valuable global production chains.<sup>9</sup>

## Origins of the Adventist Work in Mexico

In the summer of 1891, Pastor L. C. Chadwick arrived in Mexico, having been sent by the Missions Committee of the General Conference with the purpose of exploring the country to see whether it would be viable to establish a permanent mission in Mexico. He took the train in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, and rode to Monterrey. From there, in the autumn of 1891, he went to San Luis Potosí.<sup>10</sup> This special envoy visited the whole country and recommended that a permanent Adventist mission be established in Guadalajara, capital of the state of Jalisco, because it had all of the characteristics needed for the establishing of a mission. Interestingly, in the summer of that same year, Salvador Marchisio, a self-supporting missionary, arrived in Mexico with the purpose of preaching the eternal gospel in the country through Adventist literature. But those two men of God never met. Neither of the two knew about the other or knew that they were in the same city inspired by the same ideal--the preaching of the gospel!<sup>11</sup>

Two years later, in 1893, as a result of the recommendations of Pastor L. C. Chadwick, a mission was established in Guadalajara under the leadership of Pastor Dan T. Jones. The group of missionaries was formed by the leader, Dan T. Jones, his wife, Clara E. Lowe, Doctor Lillys Wood, Professor Ora Osborne, nurse Ida Crawford, and Pastor Alfred Cooper and his wife.

The mission prospered for two years, from 1894 to 1896. In 1896 Pastor Dan T. Jones informed the General Conference that he had acquired a property in the best part of Guadalajara, and that he had started building a hospital, because according to an agreement made with the Mexican government, the hospital needed to open on January 1, 1899.<sup>12</sup> The hospital was finished on time and was inaugurated on the planned date, with a seeming bright future. It was a beautiful institution, built and equipped with all the advances science had to offer at that time.

On January 1, 1896, a little more than a year after arriving in the country, Pastor Dan T. Jones was able to produce the first issue of *El Amigo de la Verdad* (The Friend of Truth), managed and edited by his wife, Clara E. Lowe. Soon Pastor George W. Caviness joined them, and he soon came to be the editor of the magazine that in 1911 changed its name to *El Mensajero de la Verdad* (The Messenger of Truth),<sup>13</sup> and a short time later to *Señales de los Tiempos* (Signs of the Times).

## Pioneers

### Salvador Marchisio

He was an Italian, born June 2, 1855. He became acquainted with the Adventist message at the Saint Helena Sanitarium in California, where he was hospitalized for a breakdown in health because of overwork. The famous Adventist minister Alonso T. Jones gave him the message and Bible studies.

In the summer of 1891, he arrived in Mexico to work as a self-supporting colporteur. Marchisio came as a missionary to Mexico at the age of 35. He was the first Adventist missionary in Mexico. The following year he returned to Battle Creek to study nursing, and there he met Kate Ross, a former worker at the International Tract Society office located in Battle Creek, and he married her. In the brief period during which they were married, they had a son whom they called Iven Ross Marchisio. Kate died at the age of 33 in Iola, Kansas, on October 30, 1901, and her son Iven died a month before her; he was barely 13 months old. In 1914, due to problems caused by the revolution in Mexico, Marchisio worked for a time in San Antonio, Texas, and in 1916, for the same reason, he spent some time in Cuba, but by 1917 he was back in Mexico.<sup>14</sup>

Marchisio's work in Mexico was very varied. He served first as a colporteur, then as a Bible worker, and finally as a minister. Sometimes he was also a translator for the supervisors of the work in Mexico when they came to visit, persons such as G. W. Caviness. He also wrote several articles where he reported the work he was doing in Mexico. In 1925, 35 years after arriving in Mexico as a self-supporting missionary, he became ill. He was cared for by Dr. Swayze, a fellow missionary, in Los Angeles. He recovered and was ready to return to Mexico when he had to have a surgical operation. He was at the point of recovery when all danger seemed to have passed when a stroke suddenly ended his life on February 27, 1925. He was 75.

### Dan T. Jones

He was born March 25, 1855. He accepted the Adventist faith in 1876. He married Clara E. Lowe on August 28, 1888. He was ordained as a minister and named president of the Missouri Conference. Shortly after that he became secretary of the General Conference, a position he occupied from October 1888 until March 1891. He was assistant to the president of the General Conference, Pastor O. A. Olsen, from 1891 until 1893. His heavy duties as secretary of the General Conference, aggravated by a fragile nature, caused him to become ill, but he soon recovered. After a

period of rest under the supervision of Dr. Kellogg, he went with his family to Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico, as director of the mission there, taking with him a group of missionaries. He served as director of the Adventist Mission in Mexico until mid 1901 when he returned to the United States. He became suddenly ill and died at home in Kingsville, Missouri, September 24, 1901. He was 47.<sup>15</sup>

#### George Washington Caviness

He was born in Fairfield, Iowa, on March 28, 1857. He was educated at the Adventist school in Battle Creek, Michigan, where he met Miss Alma Lucille Walcott, whom he married in the summer of 1885. Together they started a long career of service to the Adventist Church. He was a teacher and the president of Battle Creek College from 1884 to 1894; then he joined the American Bible Society to collaborate on a translation of the Bible to Spanish. He went to Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. There he met the missionary group led by Pastor Dan T. Jones, and soon he joined the mission there as editor of the magazine *El Amigo de la Verdad*.

When the General Conference decided to send a group of missionaries to start the Adventist mission in Mexico City in 1899, the natural candidate to lead out in this great project was professor, now Pastor George W. Caviness. There he worked at a sacrificial rate—60 hours a week—during 24 years, as editor, administrator, preacher, evangelist, president, secretary, and treasurer of the Mexican Mission. His wife, Alma Lucille Walcott, was a heroine who worked as much or more than her husband as accountant and manager of the books for the mission.

During the dark years of the Mexican Revolution, this missionary couple underwent all the dangers, sacrifices, and fears without faltering and without leaving the field of duty when all the other missionaries abandoned the mission to return to their own country. George Washington Caviness expressed this desire: "I want to die in Mexico, with these people whom I love so much." But his desire was not fulfilled because he died in Los Angeles, California, on February 17, 1923, after 24 years of uninterrupted service as a missionary in Mexico.

#### Aurelio Jiménez Toledo and His Brothers Juan Catarino and Emiliano

Aurelio Jiménez Toledo was born in Ixtaltepec, Oaxaca, on November 12, 1885. His parents were Domingo Jiménez and Antonia Mejía. He had five brothers and two sisters, and his childhood was spent in Ixtaltepec. The first contact that he had with the Seventh-day Adventist Church was in 1905 when he was 20 years old. It came to him through reading the magazine "El Mensajero de la Verdad" (The Messenger of Truth) that Aurelio and his brother Juan had received as the wrapping for merchandise they had bought in Juchitán, a nearby town.<sup>16</sup>

Because of the interest that those torn pages of the magazine awoke in them, they spent two years looking for information about the origin of that magazine, wanting to know who published it; but they were not able to learn of its origin. While they searched, their father, who had acquired the habit of drinking alcoholic beverages, became very ill. As Aurelio looked for a way to heal his father, he discovered in the regional newspaper an advertisement for a clinic that promised to cure alcoholism. Aurelio and his brother ordered the medicine from Mexico City. When the medicine arrived, it was wrapped in two almost complete issues of the magazine, *El Mensajero de la Verdad*. They were the March and April issues of 1908.

As a result of this almost miraculous finding of the church that published the magazine *El Mensajero de la Verdad*, the Jiménez brothers were given Bible studies and learned Adventist doctrine; they were converted and baptized in 1911. Aurelio and his brothers started the Adventist church in Ixtaltepec and carried the gospel to the surrounding region and to many other parts of south and southeast Mexico. While Aurelio Jiménez was dedicating his life to the work of evangelizing the coast of Chiapas, he met María Teódula Mejía, whom he married. She was his faithful companion and shares the merits of the Adventist pioneers who took the Adventist message to all of south and southeast Mexico.

#### Other Pioneers

Other pioneers served faithfully in the great effort of establishing the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mexico, but whose service, because of its nature, was of short duration. There are the members of the missionary group who came to start the mission in Guadalajara with Pastor Dan T. Jones: Dr. Lillys Wood, the teacher Ora Osborne, the nurse Ida Crowford, Pastor Alfred Cooper, and his wife. In 1903, when the Mexican Mission was founded, the first president was Pastor George M. Brown. Mrs. Carrie C. Kelley, A. O. Bodwell, J. A. Leland, A. Allen John, Miguel Placencia, G. W. Reaser (president of the Mexican Mission in 1910), W. S. Swayze, J. W. Erkenbeck, Julius Paulson, and Mrs. Alice M. Swayze are others that should be mentioned.

## Spread and Growth of the Message

In 1899 the General Conference decided that a group of missionaries, under the leadership of Pastor G. W. Caviness, should go to Mexico City to establish the work of the Adventist Church in the capital of the republic. Other members of the group were his wife, the courageous colporteur Salvador Marchisio and his wife, and Pastor Alfred Cooper and his wife. When they arrived in Mexico City, they found a group of self-supporting colporteurs who worked there. The uniting of those faithful, dedicated and courageous workers made it possible for the work of evangelism to move forward strongly, especially through the printed page.<sup>17</sup>

The Mexican Mission was officially organized in 1903, and its first president was Pastor George M. Brown. The first project that the leaders of the Mexican Mission undertook was the establishment in 1904 of a publishing house named *Compañía de Publicaciones la Verdad*. The Mexican Revolution (1910-1917) that upset the political,

economic, and social order of Mexico for a long time ended the publishing company and set back the editorial work of the Adventist Church in Mexico for a hundred years. This can be determined by looking at the fact that the publishing house Compañía de Publicaciones la Verdad started in 1903 and functioned until the start of the Mexican Revolution in 1910 (though it isn't clearly evident at what moment the development of that great political, military, economic, and social conflagration ceased). A century later, in 2004, the Inter-American Division established a publishing house in Mexico with the name Grupo Editorial Mexicano Adventista. In time the name was changed to Gema Editores as the commercial label, although the legal name is Agencia de Publicaciones México Central, A. C. (a name registered in 1944).

Little by little the number of church members and organizations grew until in 1923 the Mexican Union Mission was organized with the whole country of Mexico as its territory. Actually, what was established in 1923 was the Aztec Union Mission, which included Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and British Honduras.<sup>18</sup> The Aztec Union Mission was reorganized in 1926, and the name changed to Mexican Union Mission with only Mexico as its territory, but it is recognized by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists as having been organized in 1923.<sup>19</sup> The union had 656 members and 29 churches. It consisted of six missions: Central Mexican Mission, Sonora Mission, Gulf Mission, Tehuantepec Mission, Lake Mission, and Yucatán Mission. The administrators of the union were D. A. Parsons, president, and J. G. Petey, secretary-treasurer and auditor.

With the organization of the Mexican Union Mission in 1923, the groundwork was laid for the most effective way to preach the Adventist message in all Mexico. The new administration had all the necessary structure with which to enable the preaching of the eternal gospel during the events of the last days. Time, with the blessings of God, demonstrated the efficiency of this new organization.

## Institutions

### Compañía de Publicaciones la Verdad

The Adventists in Mexico established a publishing house under the name Compañía de Publicaciones la Verdad. It was started the same year (1903) in which the Seventh-day Adventist Mexican Mission was, and it appears in the 1904 Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook as the Mexican Publishing House, at the same level and using the same listing format as the Review and Herald Publishing Association and the Pacific Press Publishing Company (later Association) together with the other 16 publishing houses that existed in the world in that year. It had its offices and the print shop at 1599 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Tacubaya, D. F., Mexico.<sup>20</sup> During that time it published the magazines El Mensajero de la Verdad and La Salud in Spanish, and The Mexican Field in English. The magazine El Mensajero de la Verdad was published for several years under that name until in 1911 the name was changed to Señales de los Tiempos (Signs of the Times). The historian Ciro Sepúlveda says, "El Mensajero de la Verdad played a central role in the creation of Adventist groups throughout the republic."<sup>21</sup>

The Adventist Review from 1901 reported that colporteur A. G. Bodwell had sold four hundred and fifty copies of the Mensajero de la Verdad on just one Sunday on the streets of Mexico City. Then sales increased dramatically. Another Sunday he went out into the center of the city and sold eight hundred copies of the magazine on that day. A week later he sold nine hundred and forty and gave out one sample, and the third Sunday he sold one thousand and fifty-one magazines.<sup>22</sup> The magazines Mensajero de la Verdad and later Señales de los Tiempos were sold throughout Mexico, in Central America, in New Mexico, United States, and it seems that for some time that it was sold in Spain. The Compañía de Publicaciones la Verdad operated during twelve years until it was lost in the ashes left by the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917).

### The Adventist Hospital of Guadalajara

The Adventist Hospital of Guadalajara, as its name indicates, was built and inaugurated in Guadalajara, Jalisco, in 1901. From the very beginning, it had problems in many areas. The building had structural problems. There had been no market study, and so the hospital was built too large and was never totally filled. The third floor was never used. The number of personnel was too great, and therefore there were administrative and economic problems from the very beginning. It functioned until 1906, at which time it was closed. It was sold in 1907.<sup>23</sup>

### Escuela Superior de Tacubaya

Founded on September 2, 1910, by George Caviness and his wife Alma Lucille Walcott Caviness, the school had many difficulties from the very beginning. It had to close its doors for a while and reopened in 1929. In 1931 the name of the school was changed to Colegio Adventista Mexicano, but that same year, by vote number 89:253, the name was again changed to Escuela Industrial y de Salud. The efforts on behalf of the school were not enough, and again it had to be closed for a short time, and then the school was moved to the border cities of Laredo and McAllen, Texas, in the United States.<sup>24</sup> The school that was moved to Laredo in 1935 and to McAllen in 1936 appeared again in Mexico City in 1938 under the name Instituto Comercial Prosperidad.<sup>25</sup> This is the institution that was moved in 1942 to Morelos, Nuevo León, and there it opened its doors as the Escuela Agrícola e Industrial Mexicana.

### Hospital y Sanatorio Montemorelos

This is a general hospital with 63 beds, inaugurated on January 26, 1947, as a culmination of the work done by two doctors, Iner S. Ritchie and Ralf Smith. The hospital is used as the main facility for the clinical practices of the medical and nursing students at Montemorelos University. In 1989 the Hospital y Sanatorio Montemorelos changed its name to Hospital La Carlota. It provides services in the areas of geriatrics, allergy, anesthesiology, cardiology,

bariatric surgery, general surgery, plastic surgery, dermatology, gastroenterology, obstetrics and gynecology, physical and rehabilitation medicine, general medicine, family medicine, internal medicine, pulmonology, nephrology, neurology, nutrition, pediatrics, dental care, ophthalmology, oncology clinic, surgical oncology, otorhinolaryngology, psychology, psychiatry, radiology, rheumatology, traumatology and orthopedics, urology, and six subspecialties in the vision clinic plus nine subspecialties in oral health. The hospital also offers the following services: the vision clinic, the dental center, dental clinic, radiology and imagery center, physical therapy and rehabilitation center, and the healthy lifestyle center (known informally as "Vida Sana"). As a result of the quality services offered by all the departments of the hospital, it is well known in the community and widely appreciated.

### Montemorelos University

The Escuela Agrícola e Industrial Mexicana established in 1942 is considered the precursor of Montemorelos University.<sup>26</sup> In 1951 the name was changed to Colegio Vocacional y Profesional Montemorelos. During the following two decades, the institution grew in every way, so much so that the administration of the school requested the government of the state of Nuevo León to grant it the status of university with the authorization to confer academic degrees and proposing to establish a school of medicine in the near future, as there was a hospital attached to the institution. The response was affirmative. On May 5, 1973, the governor of the state of Nuevo León, Luis M. Farías, made a decree that was published in the official record of the state of Nuevo León creating Montemorelos University and granting it the right to be a private university with authority to offer academic programs in education, accounting, and nursing. The degree in theology, although it had existed since 1942 with two-year, three-year, and four-year degrees, only had official recognition from the church, not the government, because of the laws that governed the country at that time. In 1992 the laws changed, and starting in 2010, the theology degree has been officially validated by the government.<sup>27</sup>

### School of Nursing

This was founded on February 16, 1948, as part of the Hospital y Sanatorio Montemorelos. The first director of the school was nurse Marguerite Mary Peugh Vipond. The first generation of nurses that graduated from the school were Lidia Rayos, Concepción Heras, Rosario Elizondo, Alicia Alvarez, and Adha María Sánchez. The School of Nursing was under the administration of the hospital until 1951, when it was incorporated into the University of Nuevo León. In 1967 it became part of the Colegio Vocacional y Profesional Montemorelos.

### Escuela Agrícola e Industrial del Pacífico

This school was established in September of 1948 on a property known as El Sicome donated by Mr. Francisco Byerly. The first classrooms were old buildings, among which was a flour mill. In 1949 a basement was adapted as a girls' dormitory, and the main floor was made into a cafeteria during the week and a chapel for worship services on Sabbath. Its first president was the engineer Juan Gil Rodríguez. During the years 1954-1958 the school built dormitories for both boys and girls. In 1963 an auditorium with a capacity for 600 people was inaugurated and used as a place for students and faculty to meet and as a church on Sabbath. The school operated from 1948 until 1965, when it was closed because of economic and administrative problems.

### Colegio del Pacífico

After a period of restructuring the administrative system (1965-1967), the Escuela Agrícola e Industrial del Pacífico opened its doors again, but under the name of Colegio del Pacífico (informally known as Colpac—in English, the Pacific School), and with an enrollment of 90 students. During the 1969-1970 school year, the preparatory school was added, evidence of the growth of the institution. The new cafeteria with a capacity for 400 persons was inaugurated in August 1972. During the 1974-1975 years new classrooms were added, as well as the library, and during the school year 1982-1983, the new administration building was added. In 1985-1986 majors were added in Computers and Secretarial Science. In 1995 the government of the state of Sonora gave official recognition and validity to degrees in Business Administration, Public Accountant, Nutrition, and Computer Systems. In this way, the institution took its first steps toward becoming a university as an extension of its sister school, Montemorelos University. In 2000, after a visit from the General Conference Education Commission, the institution received the status of university as Navojoa University, starting in 2001. The Pacific School continued to operate at the secondary and preparatory levels.

### Navojoa University

The university began operating under its new name in 2001. In 2002 it began construction on a new women's dormitory, which was inaugurated two years later, while in 2005 the university men's dormitory was remodeled. In 2003 the university created departments for institutional evaluation, curriculum development, institutional connections, and mentoring. In 2006, the university degree in theology was added under an agreement with Montemorelos University, and in 2010 the first graduating class in theology had eight graduates. During the years from 2010-2019, Navojoa University has grown constantly—in its academic programs, in the number of students, and in the influence it has on the community.

### Escuela Agrícola e Industrial del Sureste

Established in 1948 in Teapa, Tabasco, it began operation on property known as La Trinidad. Although it continued to operate on this property for a number of years, the location did not meet the needs of an Adventist educational institution, and in 1957 it was moved to Pueblo Nuevo Solistahuacán, Chiapas, to the sector of the municipality called Santa Cruz y Venecia. There it began to operate as Colegio Linda Vista, and it offered only the secondary level of education. Its principal and founder was Professor Horace Agard Kelley.

The secondary school was incorporated officially on May 15, 1959. In 1960 the first boys's dormitory was built. In 1962 the cafeteria was built. The preparatory level began its activities in 1964, and that same year the school finished building the girls's dormitory. In 1965, an auditorium was built and named the Horace Kelley Auditorium, and in 1968 an administration building was added. The growth of the school was rapid and continuous.

On July 14, 1995, the Secretariat of Education of the state of Chiapas authorized the offering of a college degree in education as an extension of Montemorelos University. On June 12, 1997, Linda Vista received the authorization to be called the Chiapas campus of Montemorelos University, a status that it kept until 2005. On May 30, 2002, the governor of the state of Chiapas, Pablo Salazar Mendiguchía, declared the Colegio Linda Vista to be the Linda Vista University.

#### Linda Vista University

The university was established in 2005 using the campus and buildings of Colegio Linda Vista. The first degree offered at university level was that of Nursing, with official recognition from the state (Validez Oficial de Estudios) granted on June 20, 2001. That same year, on October 27, authorization was given for the majors in Computer Systems Management, Public Accounting, and Business Management. Four years later, on August 2, 2005, a teaching degree was added, an Education major. On August 1, 2006, an authorization was given for the degree in Computer Systems, and on August 21, 2006, an Education degree was added for teaching the higher levels (secondary and preparatory) in five areas: physics and mathematics, chemistry and biology, language and literature, social studies and educational psychology. The degree in Theology received its official recognition from the state on November 11, 2010. The growth of the physical campus and of the educational programs was rapid and continuous. On September 30, 2008, Secretariat of Public Education in Mexico authorized master's degrees in Finances and Education in three areas: Teaching and Management, Special Education, and Education Innovation.

#### Instituto Universitario del Sureste

In 1998 the Mayab Conference requested the Education Secretary of the state of Yucatán to incorporate into the Instituto de Estudios Superiores Mérida an Education major. In 1999 the state authorities issued a statement to the Asociación Cívica Filantrópica y Educativa (Adventist legal entity) approving the request. On January 2, 2014, in the presence of an authorized public notary, Linda Vista University ceded the rights of the Instituto Universitario de Mérida to the Instituto Universitario del Sureste (UNIS). On June 24, 2014, The Department of Professional Education in the state of Yucatán's Department of Education legalized the entity Instituto Universitario del Sureste, beginning in the school year 2014-2015. The following degrees were authorized by the state: Nursing (RVOE Decree 038), Clinical Psychology (RVOE Decree 2059), Nutrition (RVOE Decree 2058), Education (RVOE 2060), Public Accounting and Finances (RVOE Decree 2039), Information Technology and Finances (RVOE Decree 011). The Instituto Universitario del Sureste has grown in every aspect. It is a day school. It ended the 2019-2020 school year with 350 students.

## Administrative Entities

During the 62 years that the Mexican Union Conference—as a single entity covering the whole country of Mexico—operated, the church grew slowly and with great effort. By 1985 Mexico had a population of 79,649,138 inhabitants, while the Adventist church there had 552 churches and 191,613 members. The Mexican Union Conference was organized into seven conferences: Central, Interoceanic, Isthmus, North, Northeast, South, and Southeast. The headquarters for the union was located at 431 Uxmal, Narvarte Colony, Mexico 12, D.F.<sup>28</sup> In 1985 the constituency meeting of the union was held at the Tacubaya Church on January 5 to 7. There a vote was taken to divide the Mexican Union into two unions: South Mexican Union Mission and North Mexican Union Conference.

#### North Mexican Union Conference

The North Mexican Union Conference included the states of Aguascalientes, Baja California Norte, Baja California Sur, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Durango, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Mexico (state), Michoacán, Nayarit, Nuevo León, Querétaro, San Luis Potosí, Sinaloa, Sonora, Tamaulipas, Zacatecas, and the Federal District. The total population in this territory was 56,690,500. There were 189 churches with 46,811 members. It had three conferences: Central Mexican Conference, North Mexican Conference, and Northeast Mexican Conference. It also had a mission: West Mexican Mission. The administrators elected were: Nefalí Quintero Abrego, president; Jaime Cruz Pereira, secretary; Saúl Barceló Guerrero, treasurer. The headquarters of the North Mexican Union Conference were established on the corner of the National Highway and the road to Hualahuitas, in Montemorelos, Nuevo León, Mexico.<sup>29</sup>

#### South Mexican Union Mission

The South Mexican Union Mission (later to be Chiapas Mexican Union Conference) was made up of the states of Campeche, Chiapas, Guerrero, Hidalgo, Morelos, Oaxaca, Puebla, Quintana Roo, Tabasco, Tlaxcala, Veracruz, and Yucatán. The total population of this territory was 26,252,084 inhabitants. There were 410 churches and 168,289

members, and it was organized into four conferences: Inter-Oceanic Mexican Conference, Isthmus Conference, South Mexican Conference, and Tabasco Conference. It had two missions: Mayab Mission and Soconusco Mission. The first administrators were Agustín Galicia Montesinos, president; Isaac Gómez Tenorio, secretary; and Pablo Balboa Sánchez, treasurer. The headquarters for the union was located in the same site as the former Mexican Union Conference at 431 Uxmal, Narvarte Colony, Mexico, D. F.<sup>30</sup>

The years from 1985 to 2000 went by. The churches in both unions continued to grow, new members were added, new missions, conferences, and institutions were created. On April 3, 2000, the South Mexican Union convened a special session in Villahermosa, Tabasco, to discuss the possibility of readjusting the South Mexican Union's territory in order to form two unions.<sup>31</sup> The Inter-American Division Board appointed a special committee to study the proposed territorial adjustment. The committee met on January 23, 2001.<sup>32</sup> The committee sent a request to the higher-ranking organizations, which stated: "As the central part of Mexico formed by the states of Guerrero, Morelos, Puebla, Oaxaca, Hidalgo, Tlaxcala, and Veracruz has been strengthened and has excellent potential with remarkable development for the church, we recommend to request the board of directors of the Inter-American Division and the General Conference to adjust the territory of the South Mexican Union by creating a third union in Mexico. The territory of this new union would be the South Pacific Conference, the Hidalgo-Veracruz Conference, the Southern Veracruz Conference, the Central Mission, the Oaxaca Mission, and the Olmeca Mission. This union's name would be the Inter-Oceanic Mexican Union, with headquarters in Mexico City."<sup>33</sup>

## Inter-Oceanic Mexican Union Conference

In the spring of 2001, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists voted to create the Inter-Oceanic Mexican Union Mission, whose territory would be the states of Guerrero, Morelos, Puebla, Tlaxcala, Hidalgo, Veracruz, Oaxaca, part of the state of Mexico, and a portion of northeastern Tabasco bordered by the Samaria River or Mezcalapa. The Inter-Oceanic Mexican Union began with 713 churches and 175,033 members.<sup>34</sup> The first administration of the Inter-Oceanic Mexican Union consisted of Pastor César Gómez, president; Pastor Moisés Reyna Sánchez, secretary; CPA Jairo Zavala Arias, treasurer. The original headquarters of the Inter-Oceanic Mexican Union was located at 431 Uxmal, Narvarte Colony, Benito Juárez Delegation, Mexico, D. F. It has since been moved to 3647 Gran Avenida, Las Cuartillas Colony, Puebla, Puebla, Mexico.

When the territory was adjusted to form the new Inter-Oceanic Mexican Union Mission, the South Mexican Union Conference was left with five fields: Central Chiapas, Mayab, North Chiapas, Soconusco, and Central Tabasco. The South Mexican Union Conference then was set in operation in November of 2001 with 232,901 members. The administrators named were Pastor David Javier Pérez, president; Pastor Jairo Tenorio, secretary; and CPA Pedro León, treasurer.

The three Mexican unions—North, Inter-Oceanic and South—prospered in the following years, 2001--2007. During this period concern arose regarding how to reach the people of Mexico City, one of the largest metropolitan areas in the world.

## Central Mexican Union Mission

The Inter-American Division decided to focus its efforts on what it considered to be the major challenges in their territory: Bogotá, Colombia; Caracas, Venezuela; and Mexico City. A request from the Inter-American Division to the General Conference on April 7, 2008, was worded as follows:

RECOMMENDED, to reorganize the North Mexican Union Conference and the Inter-Oceanic Mexican Union Mission in the Inter-American Division into three unions: 1. North Mexican Union Conference with constituency from Baja California Conference, Gulf Mexican Conference, North Mexican Mission, Northeast Mexican Conference, Northwest Mexican Conference, Sinaloa Mission, and West Mexican Mission; 2. Inter-Oceanic Union Mission with constituency from Hidalgo Veracruz Conference, Oaxaca Mission, Olmeca Conference, South Pacific Conference, and South Veracruz Conference; and 3. Central Mexican Union Mission with constituency from Azteca Mexican Mission, Bajío Mexican Mission, Central Mexican Mission, and Metropolitan Mexican Conference, with their headquarters located in Mexico City, effective May, 2008.<sup>35</sup>

The Central Mexican Union Mission was formed in May 2008, and its territory included the states of Aguascalientes, Guanajuato, Mexico, Mexico City, Michoacán, Querétaro, and the north portion (Tierra Caliente) of the state of Guerrero. It had 86,886 members who met in 244 organized churches and 153 Sabbath Schools. It had the following administrative units: Aztec Mexican Mission, Bajío Mexican Mission, Metropolitan Mexican Conference, and Valley Mexican Mission. Its first president was Pastor Tomás Torres de Dios.

## Southeast Mexican Union Mission

Until August 2012 the South Mexican Union Mission's territory included the states of Yucatán, Campeche, Quintana Roo, Chiapas, and the southeast section of the state of Tabasco. On January 26, 2012, the members of the commission to study the possibility of readjusting the territory of the South Mexican Union Mission into two unions met in the city of Mérida, Yucatán. After all the work and the decisions of all the committees, a constituency meeting



was held in August of 2012, where the decision was taken to divide the South Mexican Union Mission into two, creating the Southeast Mexican Union Mission with five local fields: Campeche Mission, Central Tabasco Mission, East Tabasco Mission, Mayab Conference, and Quintana Roo Mission. The union began with 105,815 members and 1,023 churches and congregations. The administrators named for the first quinquennial period were: Pastor Isaías Espinoza, president; Pastor David Celis, secretary; and Public Accountant Pedro León, treasurer.

## Chiapas Mexican Union Conference

The South Mexican Union Conference (formerly the South Mexican Union Mission) was created with the state of Chiapas as its territory. It consisted of six local fields: Chiapas, Highlands, Central Chiapas, North Chiapas, West Chiapas, Soconusco, and South Chiapas. It had a membership of 213,360. Its headquarters were established in the city of Tuxtla Gutierrez, Chiapas. The Inter-American Division, at its mid-year meetings May 9, 2012, named the new administration of the South Mexican Union Conference: Pastor Ignacio Navarro Pérez, president; Pastor Dimas López López, secretary; and Public Accountant Jairo Zavala Arias, treasurer.<sup>36</sup>

That same year, 2012, the Inter-American Division authorized the change of name for the union, and it became the Chiapas Mexican Union Conference, a name it carries to this day. It has in its territory 5,217,908 inhabitants, 214 districts, 1,147 organized churches, 1,920 organized Sabbath Schools, and 253,338 members.

## Important Points Regarding Membership

The growth of membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mexico has been marked. In 1930 there were 37 churches and 1,297 members, while the country had 15,582,422 inhabitants. The ratio of Adventists to 100,000 inhabitants was 8.32. In 1940, a decade later, the number of churches had been doubled (90) and the membership tripled (4,199), with the ratio of Adventist to 100,000 inhabitants was 25.5. Jumping ahead to the year 2000, the Adventist Church in Mexico had 1,565 churches and 505,558 members. The ratio of Adventist to 100,000 inhabitants was 518. And in 2019, the last year for which we have data, there are 778,051 church members and 7,033 churches in Mexico. The ratio of Adventist to 100,000 inhabitants is 650.92.

At the same time, the administrative units grew at the same rate as the membership. The six initial missions in 1923 stayed the same until 1975 when the West Mexican Mission in Guadalajara, Jalisco, was organized. The original Mexican Union remained the only one until 1985 when the country was divided into two unions: the North Mexican Union Conference and the South Mexican Union Mission. After that the formation of new missions, conferences, and unions continued at a steady rate. In 2001 the Inter-Oceanic Mexican Union Conference was organized, in 2008 the Central Mexican Union Mission, and in 2012 the Southeast Mexican Union Mission. This has been a marked growth, and it continues, thanks to God's blessings and leadership.

## Effects of Political Events

All political happenings affect all the social institutions of a country. The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mexico has been especially affected by two great political movements: Las Leyes de la Reforma (the laws passed by the Reform) and the war known as the Guerra de Reforma (1855-1863) and the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917).

Laws Passed During the time of La Reforma

These were passed in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, between 1855 and 1863, during the presidencies of Juan Alvarez, Ignacio Comonfort, and Benito Juárez. The main objective of these laws was the separation of church and state and the limitation of the power of the Catholic Church, which had exercised great civil and religious power over the people and the government of Mexico. For example, the Catholic Church controlled the civil status of all citizens, registering births, marriages, and deaths.

These were the laws passed at the time of La Reforma

Regarding churches. 1857 (by the authority of José María Iglesias, Minister of Justice, Ecclesiastic Business and Public Instruction during the government of President Ignacio Comonfort.) It prohibited the collecting of parochial rights and profits such as tithe.

Lafragua Law. 1855. It granted the liberty of expression in the printed word.

Benito Juárez, in 1859, set up his government in Veracruz and declared the following reforms, already announced in 1855 and 1857.

The nationalization of all ecclesiastical property and the confiscation of all church goods. The law of civil matrimony, giving no civil legitimacy to church marriages and making marriage a civil contract with the state (1859).

Law integrating the civil register—all births and deaths had to be recorded as a civil contract with the state (1859).

Law disroffing monks and nuns; convents and cloisters were forbidden.

Law of freedom of worship: each person had the liberty to practice whichever form of worship he or she desired.

One of the main consequences of the laws of La Reforma was the Guerra de la Reforma (War of Reform) or the war of three years. It was a civil and religious war that lasted from 1858 until January 10, 1861. The nation was divided into two large groups: Liberals and Conservatives. Each group fought for its own ideals.

The ideals and principles of the Leyes de la Reforma played a fundamental role in the ideology that gave birth to the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917) and were incorporated into the Constitution of 1917, put into effect on February 5, 1917. Starting in 1916, even before the new constitution was put into effect, there were confrontations between the Catholic Hierarchy and the government because of Article 3, which gave the government total control of education, and Articles 3, 5, 14, 27 and 30, which created a civil state and complete separation between church and state, and affected other church interests.

After the new constitution went into effect, the clashes between the Catholic Church and the government continued because of the radical nature of other secondary laws, such as the Calles Law. These led to a religious war known as the Guerra Cristera, which lasted from 1926 until 1929.<sup>37</sup>

The Mexican Revolution (1910-1917)

Although the Mexican Revolution as a historical and social process covers a long period of time, the name is generally applied only to the period of armed struggle which started on November 20, 1910, the date of the call to arms made by Francisco I Madero, until February 5, 1917, when the new constitution went into force.<sup>38</sup>

These two great political movements (Leyes de la Reforma and the Mexican Revolution) had a great impact both in the short term and in the long term for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mexico. The laws passed under Leyes de la Reforma, whose principles were incorporated into the Constitution of 1917, limited the activities of the Catholic Church. The Leyes de la Reforma prohibited religious gatherings outside of churches, foreign priests (religious ministers) from exercising their professions in the country, religious education in elementary and secondary schools, and religious programs on the radio or television. Although the enforcing of these laws was subjective, depending on the local government, and even though there were changes in the laws over time, the Seventh-day Adventist Church was never able to have a radio, much less a television station/program. The Mexican Revolution (1910-1917) also put an end to the recently founded Adventist printing house named Compañía de la Verdad, started in 1904, and the Colegio Superior Adventista (Adventist School of Higher Education) established in 1910.

In this way these two great political events set back the Adventist publishing work for more than a century and Adventist higher education for more than fifty years. Besides, being subject to these laws gave the Adventist Church in Mexico and its administration and peculiar character that some saw as nationalism, although it was not really that way at all. "Of all the unions of Inter-America, none offered a more singular challenge than Mexico."<sup>39</sup>

## The Place of Adventism in Mexico

The social action of thousands of Seventh-day Adventist pastors, teachers, doctors, colporteurs, and church members has without a doubt influenced Mexican society. The thousands of graduates from its educational institutions, especially its universities, have had an elevating influence on society. We can only try to imagine the silent influence that 40 graduating classes of doctors and over 1,200 health professionals who have come out of the prestigious School of Medicine of Montemorelos University have had in all the hospitals and private practices where they serve in their ministry of health.

The reading of Adventist books and magazines that circulate throughout the country without a doubt has had a strong moral influence on Mexican society. It is a silent influence that sooner or later is revealed through its fruits. In various parts of the country, especially in the south where the proportion of Adventist members to inhabitants is higher, as well as in areas where our education and health institutions are located, the government has expressed in different ways its recognition to the church for its contribution to the well-being of the community.

## Challenges

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mexico continues to make a great effort to fulfill its mission even while facing great challenges. Even though there is an Adventist presence in every state, the great cities are still far from being evangelized. One of the greatest challenges, therefore, is that of 117 Mexican cities, each with more than 100,000 inhabitants.<sup>40</sup> Also a great challenge is the combined population of the 59 metropolitan zones of Mexico with 63,836,779 inhabitants, which represent 57 percent of the total population of the country.<sup>41</sup> Especially great is the challenge represented by the megalopolis at the center of the country formed by Mexico City, the state of Mexico, and the states of Hidalgo, Puebla, Morelos, Querétaro, and Tlaxcala.

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