



Honduras Union headquarters.

Photo courtesy of Honduras Union Mission.

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# Honduras Union Mission

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## ADAN HECTOR E. RAMOS

Adan Hector E. Ramos Lagos has a master's degree in family relations from the University of Montemorelos and a bachelor in theology degree from the Adventist University of Central America. He is currently the president of the Honduran Union (2010-2020). He has served also as field president, director for youth, family, and stewardship ministries, and as a district pastor. He is married to Del Howell, and they have two sons.

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Honduras Union Mission is an organization of the Inter-American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Its headquarters are located at Residential Puerta del Sol, Boulevard Juan Pablo II, Sofía Street, Lots 10 and 11, Tegucigalpa MDC, Honduras. Its activities are governed by principles based on the model constitution of the Inter-American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

The territory of Honduras Union Mission comprises the territory of Honduras and includes the conferences of: Atlantic Honduras, Bay Islands, Central Honduras, Northwest Honduras, and Comayagüela. As of June 30, 2018, Honduras Union Mission had 466 organized churches and a membership of 123,932 with a country population of 9,017,000 inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> By 2019, the union headquarters had 14 full-time employees. Besides the five conferences listed above, it had a hospital and clinic, Valle de Angeles Adventist Hospital; a development agency, ADRA-OFASA Honduras; a publications agency, Servicio Educacion Hogar y Salud; a bookstore, Berea Bookstore; and the Adventist Educational Centers Foundation.

It is worth mentioning that, of all these institutions, Central Honduras Conference is the oldest and from which all other institutions emerged. To learn about its history as an organization is to go back many decades and discover a fascinating story.

## Origins and Development of Honduras Union Mission

Honduras Union Mission was originally a part of the Mid-Central American Union Mission. In September 2002, a field secretaries meeting was held in Montelimar, Nicaragua.<sup>2</sup> "Field Secretaries" was a method of working that had gained strength in Central America and consisted of a field president delegating authority and responsibility to certain pastors so they could lead certain areas of the territory. These field secretaries had districts and reported to the president about the evangelistic work in their assigned areas. These field secretaries were leaders who managed certain resources to do their job. This method prepared pastors to eventually assume administrative responsibilities.<sup>3</sup>

At a meeting in Nicaragua in 2002, all union administrators for the Inter-American Division were present. The method was being evaluated to see if it could be implemented outside of Central America. At that time, there was only one union in Central America: Mid-Central American Union Mission.<sup>4</sup> Pastor Pablo Perla was its president. He presented at that meeting an initiative to divide the union in two by 2010. He also presented a restructuring based on the fact that there would also be field secretaries at the union level since, until then, field secretaries were only based in the local fields. Pastor Perla mentioned that, from that moment, Mid-Central American Union Mission would be divided into three zones so that, eight years later, in 2010, the union could divide into two unions. The zones were: Zone I, the countries of Guatemala and Belize, with Pastor Armando Reyes as field secretary; Zone II, the countries of El Salvador and Honduras, with Pastor Alfredo Argueta as field secretary; and Zone III, the countries of Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama, with Pastor Luis Gonzalez as field secretary.

Someone suggested at the Montelimar meeting that the proposal to divide the union into three zones was inconsistent with the proposal to formally divide the union into two by 2010 and that it would be best to think that Central America could be divided into three unions by 2010. The president of the division, Pastor Israel Leito, said that waiting until 2010 was a long time and that Central America was ready to be parted at once into

three pieces. The following month, October 2002, was the end of the year session of the Inter-American Division, and it was voted to reorganize Mid-Central American Union Mission into three unions effective 2003<sup>5</sup>

Mid-Central American Union Mission was divided into North Central American Union Mission based in Guatemala with Pastor Mario Calderon as president; Mid-Central American Union Mission based in Honduras with Pastor Alfredo Argueta as president; and South Central American Union Mission (now Conference) based in Costa Rica, place of the former headquarters, with Pastor Luis Gonzalez as president. The Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook records the formation of the new Mid-Central American Union Mission in 2003<sup>6</sup>

## Creation of Honduras Union Mission

In 2010, two important events for the progress of the work in Honduras took place. First, the Honduras Adventist mission with 92 years of history since its creation in 1918 changed its status and was renamed Central Honduras Conference. Second, after the Seventh-day Adventist World Congress in Atlanta, Georgia, USA, the Inter-American Division held its first session in October on the island of Martinique.<sup>7</sup> There, a restructuring of Mid-Central American Union Mission was voted, dissolving it and creating Honduras Union Mission and El Salvador Union Mission. The date for the reorganization ceremony was January 30, 2011. The new administrators for both unions were also appointed. Pastor Adán Ramos was appointed president of Honduras Union Mission with Pastor Roberto E. Brown as secretary and Brother Juan José Morán as treasurer<sup>8</sup>

## Union Challenges

The new Honduras Union Mission faced many challenges. One of those challenges had to do with the Valle de Angeles Adventist Hospital, which was at the point of bankruptcy. Another challenge had to do with ADRA-OFASA Honduras, which was also at a point of collapse. A third challenge had to do with the publications agency, which was finally taken to be administered by IADPA, the parent publishing house of the Inter-American Division. The institutions mentioned above directly depended on the union, and their problems did not come one at a time but all at once. However, they were all gradually overcome.

The union had other challenges with the fields. Most of the fields were relatively new, and each field had its own challenges. In addition, government regulations were tightening, and it was imperative to have all institutions comply with government requirements. This caused the union to separate ecclesiastical matters from its other activities. For example, churches are exempt from paying taxes, but educational centers need to issue invoices for tuition payments. This led the union to separate educational from ecclesiastical institutions and create the Adventist Educational Centers Foundation. Even though schools are also exempt from paying income tax on rent, it is not so with things that are not directly related to education, such as sales of textbooks, uniforms, etc. For this, a business had to be created to sell textbooks, uniforms, and other items that are subject to tax

payments. Berea Bookstore was then created. The union had to create its own legal status and then help each field to also create its own legal status.

## Radio and TV Networks

In 2010, there was one Adventist radio station in the country, *Stereo Fe*. Although it belongs to the Adventist church in Honduras, it is managed by the laity. With five frequencies acquired in the past, it did not have the means to continue expanding. At the beginning of 2011, a challenge was launched to the fields to acquire more frequencies especially for places with no coverage. Atlantic Honduras Conference had been negotiating for a frequency for La Ceiba, and the union supported this acquisition of *Stereo Gala* on FM with an offer of \$30,000 USD. The administrators of Bay Islands Conference accepted another offer of \$30,000 USD and acquired “Adventist Hope Radio” on FM. The new region of Comayagüela also accepted \$30,000 USD to buy *Stereo Advenimiento* on FM in Choluteca. To support the purchase of another frequency in the Bajo Aguan sector, another \$15,000 USD was granted to Atlantic Honduras Conference for an FM frequency. Northwest Honduras Conference also requested support to buy an AM frequency and was granted 600,000 HNL, or almost \$30,000 USD.

Through this, preaching through radio broadcasts began around the territory. Still, there was territory which remained unentered. The union remained restless, knowing that radio and TV as it was then would become obsolete over time. So, the union began creating a radio and television system through social networking. By the end of 2018, the union board voted to create *Nuevo Tiempo Honduras Radio y Televisión*.<sup>9</sup> Brother David Velásquez was appointed radio director, and Pastor Elden Zambrano was appointed TV director.<sup>10</sup> In February 2019, Engineer Manuel López was contracted to operate radio, TV, and web pages.<sup>11</sup> *Stereo Advenimiento*, an underused frequency in Choluteca, was utilized to create an application for IOS and Android. The new union also supports *Stereo Fe* with grants for all legal and state obligations and for the professional services of Attorney Soraya Solabarrieta, who was contracted to oversee all legal aspects of the frequencies acquired by the church nationwide. In 2018, the evangelistic news program “Mission Connection” was born, and, for the first time, all radio frequencies were linked during this program.

## School System

With the formation of the Adventist Educational Centers Foundation, the union tries to not only put all its educational institutions in legal order but also raise schools’ levels and have greater control of their financial aspects. In 2018, an educational and accounting pilot program began with the largest educational institutions in the union. A platform called “FACTS – RENWEB” was contracted, and an accounting program called “FINANCIAL PLUS” was purchased. Educational associations were established at local fields, and a corporate image started to generate in all school institutions to give an identity to the Adventist education system in Honduras.

## Stewardship Strategy

In 2009, the country of Honduras suffered one of its worst crises that led to the division of the Honduran family with the Honduran coup d'état, which ended with the ousting and exile of the president of Honduras, Manuel Zelaya. Honduras was excluded from the OAS, and many sanctions were applied. Before this, the country had good resources, and the economy was very good. For over 15 years, the currency had not moved a penny in relation to the dollar – the exchange rate was 19.0274. After 2009, everything was uncertain, and the crisis lasted for many more years.

Between 2011-2015, some fields decreased in their income instead of growing. The mission advanced thanks to the Holy Spirit and the faith of the members, who rendered their resources to advance the work. In the face of the generalized crisis, the union studied several models from other unions with the plans of the Inter-American Division and established a system of pastoral care. A motto, "People who care for people," was adopted, and an aggressive pastoral visitation policy was launched. The division program, "Holy Convocation," was also adopted, and a unique version was created for the union and integrated with "Holiness to Jehovah" and other stewardship strategies, such as "Spiritual Enrichment Seminars" taught in churches.

Resulting from all these efforts, the fields were able to better fulfill the mission in their territories. Central Honduras Conference was one of the most prominent in the years after 2017, growing by 25% compared to the previous year and growing by 15% more the following year. Also, this same field launched a strategy: In four years, it would open new work in 48 new municipalities with no Adventist presence. It had not reached the 48 municipalities at the end of the four years (2014-2018), but it opened work in 28 new municipalities.

Another example is Atlantic Honduras Conference. This conference was the most affected since it had decreased in revenue by 15% compared to the previous year. With the new stewardship strategies, they were able to reach a 6% growth.

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### SOURCES

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## NOTES

1. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, "Honduras Union Mission," accessed September 2019, <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/entity?EntityID=21215>.
2. Juan Jose Moran, interview by author, Tegucigalpa, Francisco Morazán, September 4, 2019.
3. Roberto E. Brown, interview by author, Tegucigalpa, Francisco Morazán, September 5, 2019.
4. Ibid.
5. Juan Jose Moran, interview by author, Tegucigalpa, Francisco Morazán, September 4, 2019.
6. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Honduras Union Mission," accessed September 2019, <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/entity?EntityID=21215>.
7. Juan Jose Moran, interview by author, Tegucigalpa, Francisco Morazán, September 4, 2019.
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9. Board of Directors of Mid-Central American Union Mission minutes, 073-2018, September 19, 2018, Honduras Union Mission archives, Tegucigalpa, Honduras.
10. Board of Directors of Mid-Central American Union Mission minutes, 074-2018, September 19, 2018, Honduras Union Mission archives, Tegucigalpa, Honduras.
11. Board of Directors of Mid-Central American Union Mission minutes, 028-2019, March 20, 2019, Honduras Union Mission archives, Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

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