

# West Puerto Rico Conference

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## FRANCISCO J. VEGA

Francisco J. Vega, D.Min. (McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, Illinois), is a retired minister who has served the church in Puerto Rico as president of West Puerto Rico Conference and North Puerto Rico Mission. He has also served as department director for personal ministries, education, and communications; district pastor; manager of *Radio Paraíso*; and, most recently, associate professor of Antillean Adventist University. He is married to Milca Sánchez Vargas and has three adult children.

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The West Puerto Rico Conference was established in 1969 and is one of four conferences in the Puerto Rico Union.

## Territory and Statistics

The West Puerto Rico Conference includes the municipalities of Aguada, Aguadilla, Añasco, Cabo Rojo, Guánica, Hormigueros, Isabela, Lajas, Lares, Marías, Maricao, Mayagüez, Moca, Rincon, Sabana Grande, San Germán, San Sebastián, and Yauco. A population of 562,298 inhabitants lives in its territory.

As of 2018, the West Puerto Rico Conference had 104 churches and 3 companies. Its membership for 2018 was 11,768.<sup>1</sup> It had 30 ordained ministers, 16 licensed workers, and a total of 43 teachers.<sup>2</sup>

## Work Development

The first Adventist in the territory of this conference was a young soldier, David Trail, who arrived in the town of Las Marías with the United States Army in 1898. In 1902, the General Conference sent the first missionary to Mayagüez, Albert Fischer, with his wife, Ida, and little Ina. The following year, Pastor Fischer died of typhoid fever. In 1903, B. E. Connerly was sent and soon began the publication of the missionary magazine *El Centinela de la Verdad* (*The Sentinel of Truth*). In September 1904, the brothers Victoriano Fernández and Pedro Defilló were baptized and became the first fruits of evangelism. With them, the first group of believers was organized in the city of Mayagüez, and the following year another group was organized in Arecibo.<sup>3</sup>

To help in the work, the colporteur Carlos Moulton arrived from Jamaica and joined the Arecibo group. But by 1907, he moved to the Dominican Republic, where they had been interested in the missionary magazine. The magazine was published in Mayagüez until 1909, when B. E. Connerly was transferred to Panamá, and with him the magazine *El Centinela de la Verdad*.

In 1908, in the city of Guánica, the missionary medical work began as a result of the administrator of the sugar mill getting sick. He traveled to the Battle Creek Sanitarium in Michigan, United States, and, recognizing their

excellent service, asked them to send doctors to Puerto Rico. In 1909, John H. Kellogg visited the island to reaffirm a commitment to send doctors, which the sugar cane mill would use.<sup>4</sup>

One of the doctors sent was William C. Domscoke, who, after serving for almost 20 years, moved to Mayagüez, where he established a clinic. Then the Puerto Rico Conference made a plan to establish a hospital in the city, and the hospital was opened in 1954.

## Organizational History

The West Puerto Rico Conference emerged in 1969 when the island was divided into two conferences. Its first president was José H. Figueroa, and the secretary-treasurer was Ángel Pérez. After considerable growth, the territory was reorganized in the year 2000. Some of its churches became part of the North Puerto Rico Mission, and some part of the South Puerto Rico Mission.

The following elementary and secondary schools are located with the territory of the West Puerto Rico Conference: Bella Vista Adventist Academy in Mayagüez, Central Adventist Academy in San Sebastián, Northwestern Adventist Academy in Aguadilla, Southwestern Adventist Academy in Sabana Grande, and Western Adventist Academy in Mayagüez.

The administrative office is located in the Cuba sector in Mayagüez. The conference holds licenses to operate radio and television stations WTPM-FM Radio Paraíso and WTPM-LPTV-Channel 45.

## List of Presidents

J. H. Figueroa (1969–1970); Félix Rodríguez (1971–1973); F. Hernández (1973–1978); V. D. Castro (1978–1980); E. Padilla (1980–1985); L. F. Hernández (1985–1989); E. Pagán (1989–1992); F. Hernández (1992–1997); F. J. Vega (1997–1998); L. Morales (1998–2002); F. J. Vega (2002–2006); D. Rodríguez (2006–2018); Héctor Acevedo (2018–)

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### SOURCES

Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research. *2019 Annual Statistical Report: Advance Release of Membership Statistics by Division for 2018*.

Secretary's Statistical Report—Annual 2018. West Puerto Rico Conference records, Mayaguez, Puerto Rico.

*Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2018.

Vega, Francisco J. *Génesis de un Movimiento*. Mayagüez: Antillian College Press, 1993.

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### NOTES

1. Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, *2019 Annual Statistical Report: Advance Release of Membership Statistics by Division for 2018*, 5.
  2. Secretary's Statistical Report—Annual 2018, West Puerto Rico Conference records.
  3. Francisco J. Vega, *Génesis de un Movimiento* (Mayagüez: Antillian College Press, 1993).
  4. Conference of Dr. J. H. Kellogg, on the Battle Creek Sanitarium, Michigan, April 1910.
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