

South Ecuador Mission

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South Ecuador Mission (Misión Ecuatoriana del Sur or MES) is an administrative unit of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and is based in the South American Division territory. It is located at 901 Tulcán and Miguel Hurtado St., ZIP code 090310, Guayas district, city of Guayaquil, Ecuador.¹

Territory and Statistics

This administrative unit is responsible for the progress of the Gospel preaching in its region, which covers the Azuay, Bolívar, Canar, Chimborazo, El Oro, Galapagos, Guayas, Los Ríos, Manabi, Morona Santiago, Santa Helena, and Zamora Chinchipe districts in southern Ecuador. Its territory covers a total area of 159,949.29 km² and a population of 9,109,007 inhabitants.² It holds 354 congregations (135 organized churches and 219 groups)³ and 27,641 members, which represents 1 member per 328 inhabitants. An the evangelistic front, the Adventist education network has been present in Ecuador for more than 80 years, with its values based in principles that go beyond academic knowledge while seeking a balanced development of the whole human being in our physical, spiritual, and mental aspects.

In the territory of South Ecuador Mission, there are four educational institutions: Príncipe de Paz Adventist Academy, located at Marta Bucaram St., La República Ave., Las Orquídeas, Guayaquil, Guayas - Ecuador; Pacífico Adventist Academy, located at Marzo and Colombia 6, Guayaquil, Guayas - Ecuador; Miguel de Cervantes Adventist Academy, located at Los Vergeles Mz. 38th SL # 1-2 - Los Vergeles, Guayaquil, Guayas - Ecuador; and Lírío De Los Valles Adventist Academy at the following address: Recinto el Archiote, Vía Mata de Cacao, Fiebre del Cordero, Mata de Cacao, Los Ríos - Ecuador.⁴

MES uses all means of communication to warn and prepare everyone for the soon return of Jesus. Thus, there is a radio station (Guayaquil New Time Radio) in the same building as the Mission.⁵ To do the work and fulfil their purpose, the field has 280 active servants and missionaries. Among them, 31 are certified ministers and 16 are licensed ministers. There are also three licensed missionaries and 18 certified canvassers.⁶

Origin of the Work in the Mission Territory

The beginning of the Adventist work in Ecuador took place on August 30, 1904, with Thomas H. Davis – a self-supporting missionary⁷ came to Guayaquil through the Christian literature market after being sent by the General Conference (GC).⁸ At the time, Ecuador, Chile, Bolivia, and Peru were covered by the West Coast Mission.⁹ More than a year after Davis' arrival, Pastor George W. Casebeer from Idaho, U.S.A., arrived on October 5, 1905, through a grant awarded by The Upper Columbia Conference. It was Casebeer¹⁰ who, in 1906, organized the Ecuador Mission (ME), the predecessor of the future South Ecuador Mission (MES), and he became its first superintendent.¹¹ Thus, ME was first administered directly by the South American Division.

In the early years, growth of Adventism in Ecuador occurred very slowly due to the remnants of the influence of the new Ecuadorian state¹² established through the new constitution (called the “black charter”) and the full support of the Catholic Church¹³ towards this project of national reconstruction. Back then, there were only 10 Sabbath keepers and the two workers, Davis and Casebeer.¹⁴ In 1910, the Mission and Sabbath School departments were organized and were headed by Mrs. Osborne,¹⁵ a licensed missionary and nurse who was working in the country. By 1913, William Steele (1908), William W. Wheeler (1909-1911), and Santiago Mangold (1912-1913) had also served as superintendents. During the first 24 years of missionary work, only 23 people were baptized in Ecuador.¹⁶

In 1911, Ecuador Mission transferred its headquarters to the city of Quito, and between February 12 and 22⁷, 1914, the South American Union Session took place in Montevideo, Uruguay, where, by GC recommendation, it was decided to appoint C. E. Knight as superintendent pastor and John Osborne as treasurer and secretary of MES.¹⁸ In this Session, Ecuador Mission became part of the Inca Union Mission with its headquarters in Peru, and covered Ecuador and Bolivia.¹⁹ In addition, the GC voted to offer the U.S. \$15,000.00 designated to the organization of the new mission field.²⁰ During the beginning of the 1920s, H. D. Isaac was sent from Washington to be the Ecuadorian superintendent. It was during those years that the first executive board was organized by the Ecuador Mission, and the new position of secretary-treasurer was created. Isaac was also the one who moved the church headquarters to the city of Guayaquil.²¹

Later, Orley Ford, who soon led the Ecuadorian Mission (1925-1928), chose to move the church headquarters again, this time to the city of Cajabamba, Chimborazo province, where a project among the indigenous people began. It reached more than 20,000 people, one of the most relevant projects to date.²² In the following years, ME HQ changed its address a few more times. In 1931, J. D. Replode decided to move the mission headquarters to Riobamba, and in 1933, Francisco Brouchy – as the new church director in the country – brought it back to Guayaquil. Replode, in its second administrative mandate (1936-1937), moved the headquarters to Quito.²³ In 1945, C. E. Fillman definitively established the new publications department. He was replaced subsequently by L. C. Caviness (1946-1948) and I. M. Vacquer, who led the mission from 1948-1949, having in that last year acted for the first time the role of president of ME.²⁴

In 1946, ME was administered by the Inca Union Mission (UI) and only had 4 churches and slightly more than 257 members in the country.²⁵ This was partly due to the war between Peru and Ecuador, which prevented them from having a good administration. Halfway through 1950, Pastor Jorge Rendón arrived in Ecuador to develop an evangelistic ministry – voted by the G.C. Realizing the great possibilities of growth, he organized the radio department to advance the preaching of the Gospel.²⁶ With this missionary expansion in Ecuador, new projects were implemented. Pastor Nathan M. Merkel (1961-1966) – who had been the president of the church in the country – innovated by adding television to the ME Radio Department, and that produced great results.²⁷ In addition, he planted ME's infrastructure, which was inaugurated on September 8, 1964,²⁸ with the UI and the ME presidents in attendance.²⁹

It was in 1974 that, for the first time in ME history, an Ecuadorian – Pastor Luis Rueda – took over the mission presidency. Another significant event was the 17th Ecuador Mission Congress, which took place from February 1st to 4th, where Pastor Henrique Berg – Inca Union Mission president – presented the official decision to remove ME from UI management and to become a permanent South American Division (SAD) field. Thus, from 1983,³⁰ ME thus started being managed directly by the SAD.³¹ Later, in 1990, they were allowed to split their field in two local missions.³² In 1993, after carrying out the Extraordinary Congress in Quito,³³ MES inherited Ecuador Mission infrastructure,³⁴ meaning MES was responsible for providing the North Ecuador Mission its future headquarters building.³⁵

Mission Organizational History

MES was organized in 1993, and its headquarters has always been located at Guayaquil. Its territory has covered Azuay, Bolívar, Cañar, El Oro, Galápagos, Guayas, Los Ríos, Manabí, Morona Santiago, and Zamora Chinchipe provinces. It was composed of 24 organized churches, 11 ordained ministers, 16 certified missionaries, six evangelists, and 9,770 members out of a population of 5,882,595.³⁶ At the time, Pastor Augusto Rivas was president, with Jorge Jiménez as secretary-treasurer. Thus, the first executive board was created with Josiel Unglaub in the Church and Temperance Ministry, Pastor Rivas in ADRA, Communication, and Education Ministry, Lorenzo Torres in Publications, and Pablo Zavala in the ministerial area.³⁷

Before the first half of 1990, MES accepted the Global Mission challenge. Therefore, it was determined that each district pastor would aim at going to and expanding the work in places where there previously was no Adventist presence,³⁸ then conducting two annual conference cycles.³⁹ The results of this public evangelism were 233 converts in the city of Huaquillas and 30 first fruits in San Miguel de Bolívar.⁴⁰ From March 31 to April 6, MES carried out an educational improvement seminary for all administrators and teachers of the church educational institutions.⁴¹ In 1994, Segundo Peñafiel was elected as MES president. Furthermore, on November 12, Puerto Ayora Church in Galápagos was organized⁴² as a result of Enrique Saéz and his wife Esmeralda's efforts.⁴³ Later, the Administrative and Ministerial Department was organized and placed under the responsibility of Pablo

Zabala, who carried out the evangelism program “*Revive*” [*Revive*] with Pastor Alejandro Bullón.⁴⁴

Later, the work was expanded into 10 cities – places where there was no Adventist presence yet.⁴⁵ In May of the same year, Pastor Wolff visited Central and South Guayaquil temples to listen to testimonies of Global Mission achievements. He encouraged church leaders and members to continue with the plan of reaching the unreached.⁴⁶ In 1996, Adventism arrived in El Desquite and Sucúa through MES.⁴⁷ After 90 years of preaching, a thousand people were baptized in one year,⁴⁸ and that’s why the church almost completed its plan of growing 15 percent during that year, thus raising the following challenges: to grow 23 percent (1997), 25 percent (1998), 40 percent (1999), and 43 percent (2000).⁴⁹ In addition, with the Women’s Ministry (MM) support, during a visit from Vasti de Viana who was SAD women’s ministry director, 60 sisters decided to commit to the mission.⁵⁰

During that year (1996), the following departments were organized: Family/Stewardship and Youth Ministries, Ariel Tenorio; Health and Temperance, Jorge Jiménez; Sabbath School and Personal Ministries, Daniel de Brun; and Women’s Ministries, Glenda de Jiménez. At that point, MES had 30 organized churches and 12,750 members.⁵¹ In 1997 in Portoviejo, the “Proyecto Supermisión 97” [Super mission 97 Project] was implemented with firefighters, police, and Red Cross support for evangelizing the city.⁵² In 1998, the church worked on Publications and held the third Canvassing School;⁵³ a Women’s Ministries plan to aid the affected by the El Niño was developed;⁵⁴ Sabbath School training was provided to Galápagos Islands teachers; an Education seminar for Pacific Adventist College (CAP) parents⁵⁵ and MES teachers was carried out;⁵⁶ and the first evangelistic campaign in Petuca was conducted, resulting in 15 people being baptized.⁵⁷

In 2000, the MES entered the Coastal Penitentiary and transformed a cell into an Adventist Church chapel.⁵⁸ Later, in 2001, Ecuador Union Mission (UE) was organized,⁵⁹ and MES gave the Ecuador Adventist Higher Technological Institute to UE⁶⁰. In that same year, Leonel Lozano was elected president and the Third Quadrennial Congress of the MES was held at the Ecuador Adventist College. Therefore, the creation of a database of Adventist professionals and a library in each church was recommended. It was also decided that lay mobilization should increase by 10% annually and emphasis should be given to small groups as a means of reaching and keeping church members.⁶¹

In 2004, Freddy Guerrero was chosen as president. By then, the Mission already had CAP and New Time Radio Guayaquil.⁶² Subsequently, MES chose Gerardo Zambrano as president and organized the Children’s Ministry under Amarilis Cedeño, who also was responsible for the Women’s Ministry.⁶³ Later, in 2006, Evaldino J. Ramos was elected as MES president, and he summoned the IV MES Congress in order to (1) receive the organized churches during the latter period, (2) inform about presidency activities, (3) elect directors of departments and institutions, and (4) consider and study programs that would enable Adventism expansion for the subsequent four years.⁶⁴

Later, in 2007, MES received training through the Sabbath School world directors.⁶⁵ At the time, the church in the region consisted of 67 organized churches, 14 ordained ministers, and 37,360 members.⁶⁶ In the same year,

Evaldino Ramos was called to direct the South Peru Union Mission's Youth Department, and Edmundo Cevallos was appointed as MES president⁶⁷. Meanwhile, projects promoted by Maranatha Volunteers – that built 18 temples and 5 facilities for schools or for relocating existing ones – concluded.⁶⁸ At the end of 2008, MES carried out the Youth Camp *Vivo por Jesús* [*Live for Jesus*]⁶⁹, and the Public Affairs and Religious Freedom Department was also organized which, along with the Publications and Communication Department, were managed by Manuel Vinueza. At the end of these administrative periods, MES had 93 organized churches and 21,763 members.⁷⁰

In 2011, South Ecuador Mission was led by Daniel Garay, who emphasized evangelism, which resulted in the distribution of 60,000 books. Many projects were carried out, such as “There Is Still Hope,” in the city of Manta.⁷¹ There was also Mission Caleb project carried out by evangelist Henry Avelino in Isabela Island – a place where there had been no Adventist presence, and soon 18 people were baptized.⁷² Finally, in 2012, the positions of secretary-treasurer were separated, with Augusto Martínez elected secretary and Cristian Gómez as treasurer. In the same year, the Youth Ministry was also organized, which was administered by Cristina Franco and Flor Saucó.⁷³ Then the evangelism project *Impacto MES* [*MES Impact*] was carried out in July, resulting in 507 baptisms.⁷⁴ In 2013, Samuel Sandoval was MES president, and he organized the Pastoral International Department – with Flor Saucó leading. Later, in 2014, Freddy Guerrero was called to be president, and MES at that point was comprised of 107 organized churches and 28,841 members.⁷⁵

On October 24, 2017, the IV UE Ordinary Congress was held.⁷⁶ On this occasion, the following MES administration was appointed, all of which still operates:⁷⁷ president, Washington Yáñez; executive secretary, Lenin Guamán; treasurer, Dionatan Monteiro; Children's and Teen's Ministries, Celia Olivo; Communication and Education, Gustavo Cevallos and Dionatan Monteiro; Family and Women's Ministries, Gustavo Cevallos and Jessenia Viteri; Health Ministry/Ministerial Conference and Stewardship Ministry, Lennin Guáman; Evangelism, Washington Yanez; International Female Pastors, Jessenia Viteri; Public Affairs/Religious Freedom and Publications Ministries, Ignacio Castro and Washington Yáñez; and Youth Ministry, Gustavo Cevallos.⁷⁸

Currently in MES, there are the following institutions: *Nuevo Tiempo Radio*, located at Cl. Tulcan 901 y Hurtado, Guayaquil, radio frequency 97.3 FM, with an audience of 4,000,000 and administered by UE directly from Quito; Pacífico Adventist College, located at Cl. Colombia & 6 de March, Guayaquil;⁷⁹ Educational Home and Health Services, a bookstore that sells an average of 1,500 ACES reviews monthly and also sells to the churches other materials including Sabbath School lessons, devotionals, hymnals, books, Bibles for adults and kids, etc. In the Summer, approximately 242 canvassers sell an average of 34,000 books, 17,800 magazines, and 710 Bibles a year.

Looking back into the past, one can see how much has been done in favor of the Gospel growth in Ecuador, but with the rapid population growth, there is still a lot to be done. Seeking to engage Seventh-day Adventist members in Gospel preaching, many projects have already been developed by MES throughout its history.

However, huge challenges must still be overcome so that the Gospel may reach each family. Being a church made up mostly of young people, keeping an eye on conservation becomes necessary so as not to lose focus on the mission. With this objective, South Ecuador Mission works for the fulfillment of the evangelical mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.⁸⁰

Presidents Chronology⁸¹

Presidents: George W. Casebeer (1906-1907); William Steele (1908); William H. Wheeler (1909-1911); Santiago Mangold (1912-1913); C. E. Knight (1914-1916); J. D. Lorenz (1917-1920); Orley Ford (1925-1928); J. D. Reploge (1929-1932); Francisco Brouchy (1933-1935); J. D. Reploge (1936-1937); J. Plenc (1938); B. L. Thompson (1939-1943); C. E. Fillman (1944-1945); L. C. Caviness (1946-1948); I. M. Vacquer (1948-1949); A. M. Tillman (1949-1958); Richard A. Hayden (1959-1960); Nathan M. Merkel (1961-1966); Bert Elkins (1967-1973); Luis Rueda (1974-1977); David C. Taylor (1978); Nicolas de Brun (1980-1984); Gonzalo Monroy (1985-1990); Augusto Rivas (1991-1992); Augusto Rivas (1993); Segundo Peñafiel (1994-2001); Leonel Lozano (2002-2003); Freddy Guerrero (2004); Gerardo Zambrano (2005); Evaldino J. Ramos (2006-2007); Edmundo Cevallos (2008-2012); Samuel Sandoval (2013-2014); Fredys Guerrero (2015-2017); Washington Yáñez (2018-current).

Secretaries: George W. Casebeer (1906-1907); William Steele (1908); William H. Wheeler (1909-1911); Santiago Mangold (1912-1913); C. E. Knight (1914-1916); J. D. Lorenz (1917-1920); F. I. Mohr (1921-1928); H. M. Colburn (1921-1936); R. N. Rojas (1937-1939); B. L. Thompson (1940-1943); Jorge Riffel (1944-1945); J. I. Hartman (1946); D. M. Ingersol (1947-1952); M. N. Soto (1953-1955); R. W. Cash (1956-1957); B. W. Steinweg (1958-1961); N. M. Merkel (1962); M. C. Alana (1963-1967); Arturo Gnass (1968-1970); Roberto Rangel (1972-1973); Douglas Ermishar (1974-1977); Manuel Egas (1978-1981); Jorge Rivas (1982-1989); Ruben Arn (1990); Manuel Egas (1991-1992); Jorge Giménez (1993-1999); Patricio Gonzales (2000-2001); Daniel Aragonés (2002); Carlos P. Rambay (2003); Pablo Rivas (2004-2008); Wilmer Sánchez (2008-2010); Cristian Gómez (2011); Augusto Martinez (2012-2015); Fernando Landeta (2016-2017); Lennin Guaman (2018-current).

Treasurers: George W. Casebeer (1906-1907); William Steele (1908); William H. Wheeler (1909-1911); Santiago Mangold (1912-1913); C. E. Knight (1914-1916); J. D. Lorenz (1917-1920); F. I. Mohr (1921-1928); H. M. Colburn (1921-1936); R. N. Rojas (1937-1939); B. L. Thompson (1940-1943); Jorge Riffel (1944-1945); J. I. Hartman (1946); D. M. Ingersol (1947-1952); M. N. Soto (1953-1955); R. W. Cash (1956-1957); B. W. Steinweg (1958-1961); N. M. Merkel (1962); M. C. Alana (1963-1967); Arturo Gnass (1968-1970); Roberto Rangel (1972-1973); Douglas Ermishar (1974-1977); Manuel Egas (1978-1981); Jorge Rivas (1982-1989); Ruben Arn (1990); Manuel Egas (1991-1992); Jorge Giménez (1993-1999); Patricio Gonzales (2000-2001); Daniel Aragonés (2002); Carlos P. Rambay (2003); Pablo Rivas (2004-2008); Pablo Rivas (2008-2010); Cristian Gómez (2011-2013); Jorge Cruz (2014-2016); Dionatan A. Monteiro (2017-current).⁸²

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