



Colegio Timón.

Photo courtesy of Colegio Timón.

Colegio Timón, Spain

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Joian Llorca is a teacher and administrator in the Spanish Adventist Union (UAE). He worked at the Colegio Urgell in Barcelona for 20 years. He served as director of the Youth Department of the UAE, the Education Department of the UAE, and the Children's Ministries of the UAE. For 15 years, he was in the management of Colegio Timón and had the privilege of coordinating the construction work and the move to the new building. Currently, he serves at Colegio Timón as a primary school teacher.

Colegio Timón, an Adventist elementary (preschool and primary) and secondary school in Madrid operated by the Spanish Adventist Union.¹

Founding of the School

Colegio Timón began its educational program in 1962, in the same facilities as the Adventist church purchased in 1945 at Alenza Street 6 in Madrid. It was the era of the Francoist political dictatorship, which supported the rule of National Catholicism and radical anti-Protestantism. Unexpectedly, the educational and civil authorities of the time tolerated its presence. The first class had 20 students. The first teachers were Fernando López and Gloria Cruz.

Joint Commitment

From the beginning, the Spanish Adventist commitment to the school was strong: The AICASDE (now the Spanish Adventist Union) actively supported it under the leadership of its president Ángel Codejón. Furthermore, Adventist families paid at the beginning high fees for the education of their children and even traveled long distances to bring them to the school. The pastors of the churches in Madrid and those from other areas in Spain donated monthly to Colegio Timón. They all were convinced that an Adventist education was the most profitable way to evangelize. The dedication and devotion of the school's staff for its vision was (and still is) also a great factor in maintaining the educational institution.

A Historical Role in the Midst of the Francoist Dictatorship

A council comprised of pastors, family representatives, and teachers operated the school at a time when the management tended to be concentrated in the hands of one person. Teaching methods were coeducational even though gender segregation was the dominant norm. Collaborative learning encouraged a team spirit in contrast to the common Spanish style of classes. The decision to teach English and other languages in a rather autocratic and conservative Spain was historical. The integration of faith in all curricular subjects contrasted with the period's strong societal atheism and nominal Christianity. All these aspects of a rather modern pedagogy would take more than 30 years to reach other surrounding educational institutions.

History of the School

- 1945 acquisition of church building/ICA offices/seminary on Alenza Street 6
- 1962 opening of Colegio Timón: first class with 20 pupils
- 1967 transfer to the church at Vallecas for larger facilities through remodeling the first floor and the basement
- 1968 adding the fourth floor and the upper terrace
- 1972 remodeling the third floor
- 1980 provisional classification as primary school and formal designation as a pre-school
- 1981 state subsidies ("Educational Agreement")

- 1986 authorization as a primary school: full educational agreement with the state for primary education
- 2004 authorized as preschool, primary, and secondary educational institution: educational agreement with the state for all three stages
- 2005 transfer to the final location in Russia Street with 327 students of 12 different nationalities and 21 teachers.

Four Major Success Factors

A major point in the school's success has been its educational philosophy and approach. It is based on the conviction that the majority is not always right and that the pillars of true education are found in the Word of God and in the counsels of the Spirit of Prophecy.

The second crucial factor for establishing the school was its legalization despite constant pressure for its closure. Luis Gonzalez, director at the time of the accreditation by the educational authorities, later remembered:

When I went to give the inspector the required end-of-year report, to have him sign the official school books, or to ask for others for the new elementary school pupils, everything was a mystery. They asked me: 'And who are you that does not appear in our records...?' But they kept quiet ... they signed ... And another year under the Lord's protection!²

Similar encounters happened again at other times.³

The third important factor was access to state subsidies in 1981, currently known as the *Educational Agreement*. The state began to pay the salaries of the employees and a part of the operating costs, which made, and still makes, Adventist education affordable for all students and all church families in Madrid. The authorities later granted full educational approval and authorization.⁴

The fourth major step was the move to the new headquarters on Russia Street in 2005. As with the previous location, the school had the support of the churches, the commitment of the families, and the leadership of the Spanish Adventist Union in the financing and in the complex, countless steps involved in a project of such magnitude. The school constructed a building of some 6,000 m² to house a modern educational center, one attached to the largest church in the Spanish Adventist Union. It has wide and bright spaces, large windows, and is equipped with the latest technologies to remain at the forefront of Christian education. During the first 45 years, rooms had been added and remodeled to the old school in the Alenza church. It had always faced deficits, at times severe ones, and therefore, the staff and students are still joyous about the "New Timón"⁵

Between these major milestones, the school community frequently experienced what seemed veritable miracles to them: the multiplication of resources when they seemed to be exhausted; the arrival of special donations at

crucial times; the support of the churches who viewed the school as their own; families who entrusted the teachers with their children's education regardless of distances, time, and effort; and committed staff and dedicated service personnel. In 2020, the school is flourishing and adjusting to new challenges for the years to come.

School Directors

Fernando López (1962-1969); Raúl Vázquez (1969-1970); Manuel Adán (1970-1971); Vicente Rodríguez (1971-1972); Esteban López (1972-1974); José Martínez (1974-1978); Luis González (1978-1987); Juan Carlos Pulleiro (1987-1989); Luis González (1989-1990); José Anierte (1990-1998); Ana Lugo (1998-2000); Paz Establés (2000-2004); Joan Llorca (2004-2017); Ana Lugo (2017-present)

NOTES

1. Because of the political circumstances of the Franco era, the tumultuous later times, and the youth of the school, the Adventist history of Colegio Timón depends on the memory of the personnel who have served God from their classrooms. Joan Llorca has compiled the memories and insights of previous directors and has added his experience as head of education for the Spanish Adventist Union and as director of Timón. The collective memory and oral traditions, on which this article is based, are lived history.
2. Luis Gonzalez, email message to the author, September 27, 2020.
3. Again from the memory of Luis Gonzalez: "I remember that, at one point, an inspector wanted to put an end to 'that anomaly' which was for him the existence of the Timón School. There was a change of inspector at that time. And the new one rang the bell one day, unannounced, and I accompanied him to all the classrooms and facilities. He remained silent and I feared the worst. He came with his partner's instructions to inspect the school and to argue for its closure. He said nothing ... until he came to the door to say goodbye. He said to me: 'This is shameful.' I panicked, but he added to my relief: 'I want you to know that I will do everything I can to resolve this situation. There are numerous state-legalized schools in much worse conditions, and I will not condone this discrimination against you just because you are Protestants.' Having said that, he shook my hand and walked away."
4. Cf. the section "History of the School" in this article for details.
5. The process of construction, financing, and moving to the other end of the city was complex. Some families sold their homes to buy others near the new school. Others travel more than 100 km every day. Despite the enormous and seemingly insurmountable difficulties, the staff, students, and their families were led and sustained by Jesus over the years.

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