

Azteca Mexican Conference

CÉSAR HERNÁNDEZ

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Azteca Mexican Conference is a part of Central Mexican Union Mission, which is part of the Inter-American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Azteca Mexican Conference's territory is the west part of Mexico City and the west part of the state of Mexico. From Mexico City, the following administrative districts are within its territory: Álvaro Obregón, Azcapotzalco, Cuajimalpa de Morelos, Cuauhtémoc, Gustavo A. Madero, Magdalena Contreras, Miguel Hidalgo, Tlalpan, and the west part of Coyoacán. From the state of Mexico, its territory includes the following administrative districts: Atizapán de Zaragoza, Huixquilucan, Naucalpan de Juárez, Nicolás Romero, Tepotzotlán, and Tlalnepantla de Baz.

The conference's Mexico City territory has a population of 4,928,707, and the administrative districts outside the city have a combined population of 2,685,269 for a total of 7,613,976. Mexico City's geographic area is 819 square kilometers.¹ The area outside Mexico City is 889 square kilometers, making a total area of 1,708 square kilometers.²

At the start of 2019, Azteca Mexican Conference had 20,087 members, 42 churches, 13 organized companies, 16 pastoral districts, 14 ordained ministers, and seven licensed ministers. Azteca Mexican Conference's headquarters is located at 398 Calle Yácatas, Colonia Narvarte, Municipio Benito Juárez, Mexico City, 03020.

Institutions

Ignacio Manuel Altamirano Educational Center located at Calle Prosperidad 91, Sección Escandón I, Municipio Miguel Hidalgo, Mexico City, 11800, offers Christian education at the preschool, primary, middle school, and high school levels and has a staff of 29 teachers.

A campground exists in the town of Xalostoc in Municipio Ayala, Morelos.³

Origins of Church Work in Azteca Mexican Conference Territory

As the gospel message began to spread, the world church decided to begin its mission outreach in Mexico by sending pastor George Washington Caviness who came to Guadalajara in 1897. Caviness would continue his service in Mexico until 1922.

In 1899, observing that church work was growing in Mexico City, Pastor Caviness moved the church headquarters to the capital. At the new location, he continued to publish "The Messenger of Truth" magazine. A printing press became a necessity to producing the magazine, so, in 1904, land was purchased in Municipio Tacubaya, and a small building was constructed at 73 Calle Agricultura. The leaders soon discovered that the Mexican laws required a legal entity to be established for this activity, so they organized *Compañía de Publicaciones La Verdad*.⁴ Pastor George M. Brown and his assistant, José González Rojas, were in charge of this operation.⁵

In 1903, the General Conference established Mexican Mission and named Pastor George M. Brown as its president, Pastor George W. Caviness as its treasurer, and Alfred Cooper as its secretary. Its offices were located at 1599 Avenida 22, Tacubaya, DF, Mexico.⁶

During the Mexican Revolution in 1910-1917, the publishing house, the school known as *Colegio Adventista Instituto Comercial Prosperidad*, and the church's membership struggled through the difficulties of that great catastrophe. At the worst moment of the revolution, following their government's advice, all the missionaries except for Pastor Caviness and his wife left Mexico. To keep Mexican Mission alive, Pastor Caviness was its president, secretary, and treasurer.⁷

Until 1917, Mexican Mission was under the direct administration of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. In 1918, North Latin-American Union Conference was organized with its territory to include Mexican Mission and the missions of Cuba, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Puerto Rico, El Salvador, and Venezuela; West Caribbean Conference; and the islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique.⁸ As part of the efforts to organize and manage the mission's broad territory, an adjustment was made to form the Mexican and Central American Missions with the territory of British Honduras, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Mexico, and the west part of Nicaragua, which stayed in operation until 1923.⁹ On October 25, 1923, the Inter-American Division committee "Voted: that we recommend the committee of the Mexican and Central American Missions to adopt the name of 'Aztec Union [Mission]'. " Aztec Union Mission's territory included the republics of Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras and the territory of British Honduras. It had 21 organized churches and 1,014 members. Its headquarters was located at 4 Calle Queretaro No. 74, Colonia Roma, Mexico City, and its president was D. A. Parsons.¹⁰ On May 21, 1924, the Aztec Union Mission committee held its first meeting in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, and voted to organize five missions, among which was Central Mexican Mission with the territory of the north half of Veracruz, Hidalgo, Guerrero, Puebla, Morelos, Querétaro, and the Federal District.¹¹

Aztec Union Mission's extensive territory was practically impossible to administer to in those times of slow communication. For this and other reasons, the Inter-American Division "Voted: that the name of the Aztec

Union Mission be changed to Mexican Union Mission.¹² The vote included the territorial adjustment that had Mexican Union Mission encompass only the country of Mexico. With relative adjustments, the rest of Aztec Union Mission's territory formed Central American Union Mission. Mexican Union Mission was organized with 29 churches and 656 members. Its offices were located at Calle de Jalapa No. 210, Mexico City, DF, Mexico. It had six missions, one of which was Central Mexican Mission. This mission's territory included the north half of Veracruz, Hidalgo, Guerrero, Puebla, Morelos, Querétaro, and the Federal District.¹³ In 1931, a territorial adjustment was made, and the states of Tlaxcala, Guanajuato, and Michoacán were added to Central Mexican Mission.¹⁴

Central Mexican Mission continued to slowly grow over the next 20 years. In 1948, its name changed to *Corporación Central*. Its territory included the Federal District and the states of Mexico, Michoacán, Querétaro, Guanajuato, and Hidalgo.

In 1964-1965, the South American evangelist, Carlos Aeschlimann Hernández, held a major evangelistic campaign. As a result, Central Mexican Mission had 2,268 members and 13 churches. In addition to the Federal District, Central Mexican Mission's territory included the states of Guanajuato, Hidalgo, Mexico, Querétaro, Michoacán, Jalisco, Colima, and Nayarit. Central Mexican Mission's headquarters were located in Agricultura 79, Tacubaya, Mexico 18, DF, Mexico.¹⁵ By 1970, Central Mexican Mission had 19 churches and 3,415 members. Its territory covered the Federal District and the states of Guanajuato, Hidalgo, Michoacán, Jalisco, and Colima.¹⁶

In 1975, Central Mexican Mission became Central Mexican Conference. It had 30 churches and 6,240 members. Its president was Pastor Jorge Campos, and its secretary-treasurer was Manuel Varela Salas. Its territory included the Federal District and the states of Mexico and Morelos.¹⁷ In 1985, Mexican Union Conference was divided into two unions, and Central Mexican Conference became part of North Mexican Union Conference.¹⁸

Formative Events that Led to Organization of Azteca Mexican Conference

Central Mexican Conference continued its development for the next 15 years. By 2001, it had 102 churches and 36,768 members.¹⁹ Given this growth, reorganization and territorial readjustment became necessary. Therefore, in 2001, the territory was divided, and Metropolitan Mexican Conference was created.

Azteca Mexican Mission was created from the territorial adjustment of Metropolitan Mexican Conference in a plenary session on June 1-2, 2005. It had 14,700 members, 35 organized churches, 17 organized companies, seven ordained pastors, seven licensed pastors, and 13 subsidiaries that formed 14 districts: Ánahuac, Central, Monument, Tacubaya, Izcalli, Naucalpan, Santa Clara, Satellite, Tecámac, Tepotzotlán, Ticomán, Unidad Morelos, Mixcoac, and Padierna.

The ideals of Azteca Mexican Conference are expressed in the following statements:

Mission: To glorify God and, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, to lead each believer to a personal and transformative relationship with Christ to enable him as a disciple to share the eternal gospel with other people.

Vision: Every member of the body of Christ prepared for the kingdom of God

Values: Give to God glory, integrity, respect, lifestyle, excellence, humility, compassion, justice, unity, and dedication.

Development

Azteca Mexican Mission was created in 2005. Later, the Inter-American Division committee certified that the mission had met the requirements of a Seventh-day Adventist Conference. On December 4, 2011, the mission was granted conference status and renamed Azteca Mexican Conference. Pastor Israel Leito, president of the Inter-American Division, certified the occasion.

In 2014, Central Mexican Union Mission held a congress in Mexico City to discuss the possibility of a territorial readjustment to Azteca Mexican Conference. Mexiquense Mission was created and began operations that same year.

In 2015, Azteca Mexican Conference had 18,423 members, 38 organized churches, nine ordained pastors, seven licensed pastors, and 16 districts: Anáhuac, Atizapán, Central, Chamapa, Izcalli I, Izcalli II, Mixcoac, Monument, Naucalpan, Nicolás Romero, Padierna, San Mateo, Satellite, Tacubaya, Tepotzotlán, and Ticomán.

Recent Events

Azteca Mexican Conference's geography makes it vulnerable to volcanic eruptions such as those of Popocatepetl Volcano, to earthquakes, and to floods. Therefore, ADRA has been active in helping the population affected by natural disasters, such as the magnitude-7.2 earthquake that affected Azteca Mexican Conference's territory on September 19, 2017. To address the humanitarian crisis, ADRA organized food pantries, construction materials, and vouchers to reactivate the affected people's economy.

However, in the midst of these challenging circumstances, the church members, far from becoming discouraged, experienced revival and engagement in evangelism. As a result, many new converts were added to the church, showing that the people of God in Azteca Mexican Conference continue to fulfill their mission with firmness and determination.

Growth of Azteca Mexican Conference

Since 2015, when Azteca Mexican Conference held its first quadrennial congress, the church has shared the gospel in many ways while seeking growth, development, and consolidation. On June 2, 2019, a radio program

called *Una Palabra de Esperanza* ("A Word of Hope") was started. This program is also transmitted through the Conference's web site and Facebook page and is available on YouTube.

Challenges Azteca Mexican Conference Faces to Fulfill Mission

1. Urban agglomeration makes fulfilling the mission in the city a special challenge, and facing this is a critical component of the strategic plan.
2. A large part of the population has still not been reached.
3. The west part of Mexico City includes some of the wealthiest, most highly-educated sectors of the population. Therefore, Azteca Mexican Conference has established a "Center of Influence" in an upscale area with the intent to reach the people, especially the Jewish population, in that area.

List of Presidents

Omar Carvallo (2005-2008); Eleazar Cipriano (2008-2014); Misael I. Escalante (2014-2015); Jorge A. García (2015); Eleazar Cipriano (2016-).

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