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North Tamaulipas Mexican Conference

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The North Tamaulipas Mexican Conference is located in the northeastern region of Mexico. The North Tamaulipas Mexican Conference is part of the North Mexican Union Conference in the Inter-American Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

The North Tamaulipas Mexican Conference covers the municipalities of Abasolo, Burgos, Cd. Camargo, Cd. Guerrero, Cd. Mier, Cd. Miguel Aleman, Cruillas, Gustavo Diaz Ordaz, Matamoros, Mendez, Nuevo Laredo, Reynosa, Rio Bravo, San Fernando, San Nicolas y Jimenez, Soto La Marina, and Valle Hermoso in the state of Tamaulipas. In 2019, it had 68 churches, 11,508 members, and a general population of 2,482,278.¹

The North Tamaulipas Mexican Conference is rich in culture because it lies along the border with the United States. Persons from the interior of Mexico and from other countries converge there, which creates a fusion of customs, languages, and traditions. One of the most important cities of the region is Reynosa.

Institutions

Colegio Alfa y Omega is located at 610 José Arrece Street in the Rivereña Colony, Reynosa, Tamaulipas, 88620. It began classes in the Central Adventist Church during the 1996-1997 school year. Members who were committed to Adventist education, such as Dr. Lucas Maya, Elba Zacarías, Raúl García and his wife Eva, and others, raised the money for the salaries of the teachers until such a time as the school could be financially stable. The Gulf Mexican Mission sent a teacher, Ofelia Rodríguez Ramírez, as the first principal of the institution, for the school year 1997-1998. During this year the elementary level was incorporated with the state. By 1998-1999 the second principal, Professor Rigoberto Flores, arrived and the school continued to grow. During the 1999-2000 school year, a second floor was built on so as to add the secondary level. In order to carry out this project, a donation was made by Mr. De Andar, the owner of a local newspaper; donations also were made by the members of the Weslaco church, the parents of the students, and the teachers at the school. With the help of Dr. Grau and Dr. Maya, a laboratory was equipped for the school. God blessed the school, and the secondary level was incorporated with the education department of the state. In 2006, the institution received authorization to offer the preparatory level, which was incorporated into the Autonomous University of Tamaulipas. Currently, the school, including all levels, has a staff of 27, including teachers, administrators, and support staff.²

Instituto de Educación y Desarrollo Integral is located at 5315 Palmeras Street in the Los Gayegos section of Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, 88290. It began operation on August 21, 2011. The classes were held at first in the Hidalgo church. Teacher Daysi de la Cruz Jamangapé was the first principal of the school. Thanks to the efforts of the local church and the administrators of the local field, it became possible to acquire a piece of property on which to build a school. After eight school years of operation, the school offers pre-school, elementary, and secondary education. Currently the school has a staff of 12, including teachers, administrators, and support staff.³

Origins of Work in this Territory

The gospel message entered the territory through events that are sprinkled with adventure, effort, and commitment to the work that God has entrusted to us. Beginning in the 1930's, Rafael M. Flores and his wife, Manuela C. de Flores, arrived in the city of Laredo, Texas. As faithful lay members of the church, they decided to share with others their knowledge of the gospel. Brother Flores crossed the border looking for people who might want to study God's holy word. He found a couple, Andrés Settle and his wife Esther C. de Settle, as well as Sofía V. de Rangel, and later he came to the home of Max L. Aguila and Julia M. de Aguila. All of these agreed to meet in the home of Lina de Zavalsa, who generously allowed the meetings to be held in her home on Perú Street in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas.⁴

Later, an American minister, J. B. Nelson, arrived in that city and met with the group. They decided to organize a Seventh-day Adventist church on April 27, 1933. The leaders were: head elder, Rafael M. Flores; deacons, Max L. Aguila and Andrés Settle; deaconesses, Julia M. de Aguila and Esther C. de Settle; treasurer, Max L. Aguila; and secretary, Sofía V. de Rangel.

They organized the first baptismal class, and just four months later the first baptism was held. On August 26, 1933, the church met at a water tank near Obregón Avenue and Coahuila Street in order to witness the baptism of Ricardo Chávez, Ercilia N. de Alvarez, María Jáuregui, and Lina V. de Zalvalsa. The officiating pastor was J. B. Nelson⁵

Finally, after nine years of meeting in different homes and dreaming of having a church, on March 4, 1942, a building site was purchased and, thanks to the generous donation of Elaine Larson de Chávez, a chapel was built. The money she gave had come to her through a life insurance policy on her husband, Ricardo Chávez, who died in an accident.

On April 27, 1970, the president of the North Mexican Mission, Pastor Jorge Salazar Escalpulli, named Professor Eliud Santos Ríos to take charge of the church, a responsibility he fulfilled until the arrival of Pastor Rafael Arroyo, first pastor of the church of Nuevo Laredo.

When the chapel they first built became too small to hold the growing membership, a church was built, and it still functions as the meeting place for the members in Nuevo Laredo. The plans were drawn up and the building of the church supervised by engineer Alvaro Sauza. The church was inaugurated on April 24, 1980, when the president of the North Mexican Mission was Pastor Neftalí Quintero Abrego. When he visited Nuevo Laredo, he organized the first branch church there, named the Hidalgo church, and transferred to it 35 of the baptized members from the main church. The president then asked Professor Eliud Santos Ríos and his family to move to the Victoria colony in order

to organize and lead another branch. In this way, the church of Victoria was born.

Later, thanks to the missionary work of the Adventist church, there was great growth in the region, and several new churches were established. Today these are the Mirador Church, the Poniente Church, the North Church, and the Voluntad 3 Church. All these churches continue to grow. Generation after generation of members remain firm in the conviction that our duty is to obey the divine command to preach the word of God.

Among several outstanding programs, we find the work of Obed Matus and his wife Yolanda Sánchez. Seemingly, in this marriage two heritages and two destinies came together. Yolanda seems to have inherited the spirit, the mindset, and the spirituality of her father, Pastor Raúl M. Sánchez. This couple challenged the mentality of their times and broke the known paradigms in their zone. They decided to go on television. They bought equipment and started a recording studio in Reynosa, Tamaulipas. There they would record a program two times a week, crossing the border every day—a time-consuming, draining task. They almost always recorded at night, crossing the border after midnight in that era of high risk and dangers that are hard to imagine. They would work at their personal tasks during the day, and at night they would work at the television ministry, broadcasting present truth. When the danger was great in Reynosa, and it became impossible to work in that city, they created a television studio in their own home in Alamo, Texas. The problems got worse, and the television ministry, *The Present Truth* in Spanish, teetered when the editor of the programs was kidnapped. Yolanda de Matus tells how they carried out the different programs on both sides of the border for the North Tamaulipas Mexican Conference. For ten years, evangelistic meetings and weeks of prayer were given, almost all of them presented by Pastor Heberto García, the speaker of the television program. During that time, more than 1,500 persons were baptized, having made their decision during those evangelistic meetings⁶ Over time, Pastor Heberto García, Pastor Daniel Loredo, Pastor Arturo Cavazos, Samuel Arturo Sánchez, and others took part in these programs. The program was transmitted locally on commercial television for five years, but then it began to be transmitted on 3ABN Latino, which continues to carry the program at this time. In this way, the gospel continues to penetrate the border territory of the North Tamaulipas Mexican Conference.

Events that Led to the Organization of the Conference

In January 2002, the Gulf Mexican Mission changed its status and became the Gulf Mexican Conference. In November 2007, the administrators of the Gulf Mexican Conference, at the yearend plenary session, voted to create the trial field of North Tamaulipas. The constituency of the conference decided to include the following municipalities in this new field: Nuevo Laredo, Ciudad Guerrero, Ciudad Mier, Ciudad Miguel Alemán, Ciudad Camargo, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, Reynosa, Río Bravo, Valle Hermoso, Maamorors, Méndez, San Fernando, Burgos, Cruillas, Abasolo, Soto La Marina, San Nicolás, and Jiménez in the state of Tamaulipas.⁷

Fulfilling the Mission

The North Tamaulipas Mexican Conference tries to fulfill its mission in the following ways.

Training all the pastors and church members, committing them to keeping their churches alive and growing each day in the preaching of the gospel.

Through the program *I Want to Live Healthy*, promoting a healthy life style in and out of the church. This program provides campaigns, marches, workshops, conferences, and seminars, which provide access to all levels of society. The program achieves noticeable results, and gains appreciation and recognition from the general community as well as the local authorities.

Each year 65,000 copies of the missionary book of the year are distributed. All the literature evangelists of the conference and all the committed members endeavor to enter the marginal colonies, the main avenues, and especially the colonies where there is not yet an Adventist presence.

Each year the members of the church are motivated to attend workshops and seminars that give diplomas for the courses taken, so that the church can grow. The workshops and seminars are provided by Montemorelos University. In this way, pastors and members are given better tools for the effective preaching of the gospel in these challenging and changing times. In addition, we carry out all the credentialing programs that the division, union, and local fields promote for the development and growth of the Church.

In order to care for the church youth, the North Tamaulipas Mexican Conference is planning to acquire a property that is strategically located for the creation of a youth camp.

Aware of the danger and insecurity that exists throughout all of the territory, the administration and pastoral leadership are emphasizing the formation of small groups that can observe the Sabbath as families. Through this security measure, the members of the church can continue missionary work from their homes.

The growth of the church in the southern part of the field is being strengthened by assigning a pastor to care for the

communities of Abasolo, Jiménez, and their neighborhoods. In this way, it is hoped to consolidate the growth of the whole conference.

List of Presidents

Jaime Figueroa Hernández (2009-2013); Rubén González Velázquez (2014-2018); Héctor Hernández Maya (2018-present).

SOURCES

Cortés A., Félix and Salazar E., Velino. *Esforzados y Valientes*. Montemorelos, N. L., Mexico: Editorial Perspectiva y Análisis, 2015.

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North Tamaulipas Mexican Conference Constitution, Article IV. North Tamaulipas Mexican Conference archives, Cd. Reynosa, Tamps, Mexico.

“North Tamaulipas Mexican Conference.” *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (2020). Accessed October 13, 2020. <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/entity?EntityID=32137>.

NOTES

1. “North Tamaulipas Mexican Conference,” *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (2020), accessed October 13, 2020, <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/entity?EntityID=32137>?
2. Department of Education, North Mexican Union Conference Archives, Montemorelos, N.L., Mexico.?
3. Ibid.?
4. Historical Sketch of the Local Church, in possession of Nidia Vidales Flores, Hidalgo Seventh-day Adventist Church, Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas.?
5. Ibid.?
6. Félix Cortés A. and Velino Salazar E., *Esforzados y Valientes* (Montemorelos, N. L., Mexico: Editorial Perspectiva y Análisis, 2015), 133.?
7. North Tamaulipas Mexican Conference constitution, Article IV, North Tamaulipas Mexican Conference archives, Cd. Reynosa, Tamps, Mexico.?

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