



El Salvador Union Mission headquarters.

Photo courtesy of Abel Pacheco Lopez.

## El Salvador Union Mission

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### LUIS ALONSO AGUILLÓN

Luis Alonso Aguillón López, B.A. in theology (Universidad Adventista de Centro América [UNADECA]), M.A. in management with emphasis in leadership (Universidad de Montemorelos, Mexico), began his pastoral ministry in 2002. He has served as a pastor in El Salvador and Honduras, in different ministries at the local field level, and as president of the Paracentral El Salvador Mission and the Metropolitan El Salvador Conference. He is currently the executive secretary of El Salvador Union Mission. He is married to Secia Karen Alfaro and they have two children.

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The El Salvador Union Mission (ELSU) is one of the 24 unions of the Inter-American Division of Seventh-day Adventists. The office is located in Calle los Bambúes, Polígono 7, #12 Colonia San Francisco, San Salvador, El Salvador.<sup>1</sup>

The territory of the ELSU covers the entire Republic of El Salvador and includes the Metropolitan Conference, East El Salvador Conference, West El Salvador Conference, Paracentral El Salvador Conference, and Central El Salvador Conference.<sup>2</sup> As of July 16, 2019, ELSU had 798 churches, 204 groups, and a membership of 195,746.<sup>3</sup> These members are organized into 2,748<sup>4</sup> congregations or small groups.<sup>5</sup>

## Organizational History

In 1915 an Adventist missionary colporteur, along with his wife and daughter, was sent to the territory of El Salvador for the first time. His name was John L. Brown. As a result of his hard work, the El Salvador Mission was organized in 1915<sup>6</sup> with 19 members.<sup>7</sup> The church was developed in the 14 departments of the country and, later, this field was reorganized in 1927, 1996, 2006, and 2008,<sup>8</sup> finally becoming the Metropolitan El Salvador Conference. By 1996, development of the church in the eastern zone had been called for the Central American Union to be organized, as the Salvadoran Oriental Mission.<sup>9</sup> As a result of the growth and institutional maturity, the East El Salvador Mission was reorganized and changed its status to an association in 2007.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, and for the same reason, this field was divided and the Paracentral El Salvador Mission was born.<sup>11</sup>

By 2006 it was decided that the territory of the Salvadoran Association would develop further by forming a new field. This is how the West El Salvador Mission was born, a field that was reorganized and changed its status to conference in 2015.<sup>12</sup> In 2008, the Metropolitan El Salvador Conference was reorganized and a new field was created, the Central El Salvador Mission.<sup>13</sup>

At the beginning of 2003, the Central American Union was reorganized to form three unions: North Central American Union Mission, with headquarters in Guatemala; Central Union Mission of Central America, with headquarters in Honduras; and South Central American Union, which comprises Costa Rica and Nicaragua; El Salvador became part of the Central Union Mission of Central America.<sup>14</sup>

At the Inter-American Division year-end meeting in 2010, there was a need to reorganize the Central Union Mission by dividing it into two unions, El Salvador Union Mission<sup>15</sup> and Honduras Union Mission,<sup>16</sup> and establishing the administrations of both union missions.

In the 2011 annual statistical report of the General Conference, it was reported that the El Salvador Union Mission was made up of two conferences and three missions, with a total of 652 congregations and 233 groups. The membership of El Salvador Union Mission (ELSU) at the beginning of 2011 was 202,353.<sup>17</sup> The ELSU, with its conferences and missions, had 390 active employees at that time.<sup>18</sup>

The El Salvador Union Mission statement focuses on the main objective of its activity: "As God's people, led by the Holy Spirit, we guide people to a transformative relationship with Christ, empowering them through small congregations to preach the Eternal Gospel in El Salvador."<sup>19</sup>

The El Salvador Union Mission fulfills this mission through its plan of establishing small congregations that create an environment where the whole family can spiritually grow and develop their talents and gifts. Small congregations allow everyone, from the youngest member to the oldest, to serve God and participate in the preaching of the gospel.

One of the most significant activities that have been developed in the El Salvador Union Mission is the formation of small congregations. On November 28 and 29, 2014, the leaders and members of small congregations throughout the country along were present in the capital and filled the Cuscatlán stadium. It is the largest sports stadium in El Salvador. Both days of the campaign more than 55,000 people gathered there. At the end of the meetings, 4,800 people gave their lives to Jesus through baptism.<sup>20</sup>

In the El Salvador Union Mission, children, youth, women, and families are given special attention through the respective departments and ministries. Support programs and materials are prepared to strengthen their spiritual growth, moral values in society, and physical and mental development.

The El Salvador Union Mission has an educational system of 25 schools<sup>21</sup> in its five conferences, which offer everything from primary education to secondary education, with the goal of sharing values, health principles, and intellectual knowledge to its more than 6,000 students.<sup>22</sup>

From October 28 to 30, 2016, for the first time since the organization of the El Salvador Union Mission, leaders and members of the Inter-American Division met in the city of San Salvador. They came from 24 unions and represented the 42 countries that make up the Inter-American Division.<sup>23</sup>

On October 30, 2016, the current offices were inaugurated with the participation of many church members from the five conferences, as well as teachers, colporteurs, pastors, field administrators, office employees, community friends, and representatives of the mayor of San Salvador. The ceremony was conducted by the president of the Inter-American Division, Pastor Israel Leito, accompanied by Pastor Elie Henry, executive secretary, and Pastor Filiberto Verduzco, treasurer, as well as the administration of the El Salvador Union Mission. A dedication and commitment program was held to carry out God's work in El Salvador.<sup>24</sup>

## Executive Officers

Presidents: Abel Pacheco López (January 2011 to present).

Secretaries: Víctor Daniel Burgos, III (January 2011 to January 2017); Luis Alonso Aguillon López (February 2017 to present).

Treasurer: Carlos Alberto Martínez Mejía (January 2011 to present).

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### SOURCES

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Rivera, Fabricio. "En El Salvador, esfuerzos de evangelización se multiplican en todo el país." Inter-American Division, December 9, 2014. Accessed July 17, 2019. <https://www.interamerica.org/es/2014/12/en-el-salvador-esfuerzos-de-evangelizacion-se-multiplican-en-todo-el-pais/>.

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## NOTES

1. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, "El Salvador Union Mission," accessed July 11, 2019, <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/entity?EntityID=32674>.
2. "El Salvador Union Misión" *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2012), 134.
3. Seventh-day Adventist Church, "El Salvador Union Mission—IAD," Adventist Church Management System, accessed July 16, 2019, [www.acmsnet.org](http://www.acmsnet.org).
4. Ester Mejía, Secretary of the presidency, El Salvador Union Mission, interviewed by the author, San Salvador, El Salvador, July 16, 2019.
5. In the modern history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and especially in El Salvador, the small group (PC) is a group of members (between 6 and 12), grouped by affinity or by the area where they live. They meet to share and interact with each other, sharing topics about Bible study, prayer, and philanthropy. They also celebrate social activities. The center of the meetings is not a church building, because they meet at brothers, sisters, or friends' houses. The meeting is held once a week.
6. "Salvador Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1916), 166.

7. Seventh-day Adventist Church, *Seventh-day Adventist Conferences, Missions, and Institutions. The Fifty-fourth Annual Statistical Report*, Takoma Park, Washington, D. C., U.S.A. 1916. ?
8. "Metropolitan El Salvador Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2009), 140. ?
9. "East El Salvador Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1996), 128. ?
10. "East El Salvador Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2008), 140. ?
11. "Paracentral El Salvador Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2009), 141. ?
12. "West El Salvador Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2016), 125. ?
13. "Central El Salvador Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2009), 139. ?
14. Minutes of the Executive Committee of Inter-American Division, "Central American Union report of the Inspection Commission," Minute 03-003, January 27, 2003, Inter-American Division, Archives from Inter-American Division. ?
15. Minutes of the Executive Committee of Inter-American Division. Minute 10-184. November 4, 2010. Archives from Inter-American Division. ?
16. Minutes of the Executive Committee of Inter-American Division. Minute 10-183. November 10, 2010. Archives from Inter-American Division. ?
17. "El Salvador Union Mission (2011-Present)", ASTR, accessed July 8, 2019, [http://www.adventiststatistics.org/view\\_Summary.asp?FieldInstID=143100](http://www.adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldInstID=143100). ?
18. Seventh-day Adventist Church, *2013 Annual Statistical Report* (Silver Spring, MD. ASTR: 2013), 47. ?
19. Operating Regulation of El Salvador Union Mission, Section II "Declaration of Mission and Values of the Seventh-day Adventist Church," 25. ?
20. Fabricio Rivera, "En El Salvador, esfuerzos de evangelización se multiplican en todo el país," Inter-American Division, December 9, 2014, accessed July 17, 2019, <https://www.interamerica.org/es/2014/12/en-el-salvador-esfuerzos-de-evangelizacion-se-multiplican-en-todo-el-pais/>. ?
21. Seventh-day Adventist Church, *2018 Annual Statistical Report* (Silver Spring, MD. ASTR: 2019), 47. ?
22. Statistics provided by the Education Department of El Salvador Union Mission. Information corresponding to the School enrollment of 2019. ?

23. Seventh-day Adventist Church, "División Interamericana," Inter-American Division, accessed July 8, 2019,

[https://www.interamerica.org/es/division-inter-americana/.](https://www.interamerica.org/es/division-inter-americana/)?

24. Luis Alonso Aguillón López, personal knowledge as president of the Metropolitan El Salvador Conference during 2016.

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