



North Minas Mission headquarters.

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## North Minas Mission

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LEÔNIDAS VERNEQUE GUEDES, LUCAS VÍTOR ALVES RODRIGUES SENA, AND YANKA DE ARAÚJO PESSOA

Leônidas Verneque Guedes

Lucas Vítor Alves Rodrigues Sena

Yanka de Araújo Pessoa

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The North Minas Mission (MMN) is an administrative unit of the Seventh-day Adventist Church located in the territory of Southeast Brazil Union Conference (USeB). Its head office is located on Geraldina Sarmiento Mourão Street, no. 299, Zip Code 39401056, in Jardim São Luís district, in the city of Montes Carlos, Minas Gerais, Brazil.

The missionary field of MMN covers the cities in the north and northwest regions of the Minas Gerais state. Some of the countries included are Montes Claros, Januária, Unaí, Passos, Paracatu, Janaúba, Salinas, Rio Pardo de Minas, Mirabela, and Grão-Mogol. From 130 counties covered by the North Minas Mission, there's an Adventist presence in 97 of them. The region's estimated population is about 2,304,946 people. The Mission counts with 14,826 Adventists spread over 23 pastoral districts with 75 organized churches. In that region, the average is one Adventist per 156 inhabitants.<sup>1</sup>

The territory counts on an educational entity called the Adventist Academy of Montes Carlos (Eamoc). It is located on Domingos de Souza Guerra Street, at no. 95, São José district, in Montes Carlos, and it currently has 352 enrolled students. To assist the Adventist population of the region, MMN has a staff of 58, 24 of which are employees of the Mission office, two accredited workers, and two licensed workers. There are about 30 pastors, of which 24 are accredited and six are licensed.<sup>2</sup>

## The Work Origin in the Mission Territory

The story of Adventist mission work in the north of Minas Gerais started in 1923 during a trip by Pastor John L. Brown to the region. After staying in the cities of Barbacena and Conselheiro Lafaiete, Brown went to Pirapora where he travelled by steamboat over the São Francisco River. While waiting at that location, he acquired about 10 subscriptions of the missionary publication *The Watchtower*, and he sold some of them, too. From Pirapora, Brown went to the city of Manga where he conducted an evangelistic meeting. A family had already been keeping the Sabbath and having Bible studies there.<sup>3</sup>

In April 1926, Emílio Keppke started the canvassing work the west region of Minas Gerais with the assistance of two official canvassers and three more students from the Brazil College (CAB-nowadays known as Brazil Adventist University or UNASP-SP).<sup>4</sup> In the same year, L. G. Jorgensen reported news of a great evangelistic work in São Jacinto and Liberdade churches in the countryside near the city of Teófilo Otoni.<sup>5</sup> In December 1928, the Minas Mission (these days called the Central Minas Conference-AMC) relied on 220 Adventists.<sup>6</sup>

In 1930, a number of evangelistic meetings were carried out in the cities known as Belo Horizonte by José dos Passos, and also in Aimorés by Henrique Stoehr. Also, registered missionary trips were conducted by Deodoro Barbosa in the Minas Gerais countryside in order to preach the Adventist message.<sup>7</sup> In 1931, due to the missionary growth in the southeast region, the East Brazil Union Conference (presently called the Southeast Brazil Union Conference) decided to united the Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais missions into only one field, the Rio-Minas Mission, having as their president E. M. Davis.<sup>8</sup>

In the same decade, the first Adventist efforts took place in the northern region of Minas Gerais. In April 1932, a woman named Cipriana Mendes, who was originally from Montes Claros, was baptized in the Arrudas River in Belo Horizonte. In 1933,<sup>9</sup> she returned to live in the north region of Minas Gerais due to her fragile health.<sup>10</sup> She was the first and only Adventist from Montes Claros at that time, and soon she began to preach and hand out

literature. Then, a man called Pedro Conceição Freire and his wife were baptized in Montes Claros. In early 1934, Cipriana Mendes and the Freire couple rented a room to be used for a spiritual life center; and there was the beginning of the first Adventist Church in Montes Claros.<sup>11</sup> In 1935, a canvasser named Mário Pinto started to sell books in town, and he is considered the first Adventist canvasser to work in that location.<sup>12</sup>

The spreading of the Adventist message in the north of Minas Gerais continued to progress during the 1940s. In 1943, Saturnino Mendes de Oliveira settled in Montes Claros to direct the publishing work in the São Francisco River region.<sup>13</sup> At that time, this region, which included the north of Minas Gerais, had around 300 Adventists.<sup>14</sup> In February 1944, another canvasser travelled to Montes Claros, and by his influence, other people started to take Bible studies through Radiopostal Academy<sup>15</sup> from the *Voice of Prophecy* radio program.<sup>16</sup> In November 1945, canvasser José Lugão also visited the town. Lugão arranged the first Sabbath School in Cipriana Mendes' home.<sup>17</sup>

In the end of 1945, Edvaldo Berniz and Michael Cardoso, two other colporteurs, arrived at Montes Claros from Petrópolis Adventist Academy (nowadays, IPAE), and there they organized a Sabbath School. In 1947, Enoque Medrado arrived in the region to assist in the developing work. In the same period, Pedro Conceição Freire was chosen as director of the Sabbath School of Montes Claros, with Ruivaz Freire as secretary and Cipriana Mendes as treasurer.<sup>18</sup> In 1945, the São Francisco River Mission (precursor to the North Minas Mission, which ended in 1955) began to operate, with its headquarters in Pirapora in the north of Minas. The Mission comprised parts of the Rio-Espírito Santo Mission and the Rio-Minas Gerais Mission, what nowadays is called the northern territories of Minas Gerais, part of Southern Bahia and a small part of northern Espírito Santo. Its first president was Pastor Paulo Seidl,<sup>19</sup> and had Leontino Ramalho as secretary-treasurer, and Enoque Medrado, Plácido da Rocha Pita and Sebastião Silva as departmental and district pastors, respectively.<sup>20</sup>

In 1948, the Luminar I Mission boat launch was conducted. This project was inspired by Luzeiro I, which had been piloted by Leo Halliwell in the 1930s and 1940s in northern Brazil. Luminar was built to navigate the São Francisco River, which begins in the state of Minas Gerais and extends throughout the state of Bahia.<sup>21</sup> On November 25, 1948, the boat launch, during which Paulo Seidl served as commander<sup>22</sup> and his wife, Alcía Seidl, as nurse,<sup>23</sup> was inaugurated, and they sailed on its first missionary trip,<sup>24</sup> leaving the port of Pirapora. Until 1953, Luminar I served approximately 16,000 people, providing medical and dental care including tooth extractions and other minor surgeries.<sup>25</sup>

During this first missionary trip, Paulo Seidl visited the locations of Rodeador and Porto Novo in the north of Minas Gerais. In Rodeador, located about 6.2 miles from the city of Januária, there were already 19 Adventists and 20 others who were preparing for baptism. For ten days, Pastor Seidl held evangelistic conferences coinciding with the Luminar's medical work.<sup>26</sup> In early 1949, Paulo Seidl visited Montes Claros, where he directed a new evangelistic series in city hall, increasing the interest of several people in learning more about the Adventist message. Student and canvasser Juventino Monteiro continued the work of selling books, and Pastor

Werner Bleck carried on Pastor Seidl's lectures, soon starting a baptismal class with eight people.<sup>27</sup> Finally, in early 1950, the Sabbath School of Montes Claros had 29 members,<sup>28</sup> of whom three were baptized.<sup>29</sup>

In 1952, the Adventist group of Montes Claros was led by Pastor Sebastião Silva from the São Francisco River Mission.<sup>30</sup> In March 1953, 11 people were baptized by Pastor Paulo Seidl. At that time, the group had 75 people participating in the Sabbath School in addition to seven nearby branch Sabbath Schools,<sup>31</sup> and in 1954, it was considered one of the most flourishing churches of the Rio São Francisco Mission.<sup>32</sup> It is uncertain exactly when the Montes Claros Church was organized, but in January 1955, the Rio São Francisco Mission had four organized churches and 437 Adventist members.<sup>33</sup> However, in the same year, the Rio São Francisco Mission's territory was incorporated into the Mineira, Bahia, and Sergipe missions.<sup>34</sup>

At the end of the 1950s, the northern region of Minas Gerais experienced significant advances in Adventist education. In 1959, Adventist elementary schools in Januária taught 45 students and were led by Abrão do Carmo; Pirapora had 40 students, with Alvino de Oliveira as director; and Montes Claros with 120 students, which was directed by Albertina and Ednir Pereira. During that period, Montes Claros was the center of the pastoral district of the São Francisco River Valley, and they already had an organized Adventist youth society: the Montes Claros Adventist Society (MCAS). The pastor serving this district was Rafael Pereira.<sup>35</sup>

Also, in 1959, there was an active church with 60 members in the city of Januária. There, the entire membership of the church was the direct result of working with the launch of the Luminar within a year.<sup>36</sup> The northern region of Minas Gerais became part of the Minas Gerais Mission, which in January 1960, had 1,591 Adventists and 12 organized churches.<sup>37</sup> In 1961, there was a Pathfinders Club in the church of Montes Claros, then considered the first in the entire Minas Gerais Mission, directed by João Stehling.<sup>38</sup> In February 1962, the launch of the Luminar II, successor to Luminar I, was held, and its supporting head offices were also located in the city of Pirapora.<sup>39</sup> Pastor Leslie C. Scofield was the commander, assisted by his wife, Nurse Donna Scofield. Shortly after its inauguration, the boat traveled for about 248 miles along the São Francisco River, covering the northern tip of Minas Gerais and part of southern Bahia.<sup>40</sup>

At the end of 1963, Minas Mission received land in a neighborhood of Montes Claros, and the initial plan was to build a chapel there.<sup>41</sup> In conjunction with the medical missionary work of the Luminar, Adventist in northern Minas Gerais also paid special attention to the work of Adventist Social Assistance as a means of supporting missionary work. In September 1965, Montes Claros gained a unit of the Adventist Philanthropic Work and Social Assistance (Ofasa),<sup>42</sup> which started receiving medication and milk directly from the Minas Gerais Health Department.<sup>43</sup>

Two years later, in October 1965, the second Adventist church in the city, Vila Magalhães, was built on that same spot, as well as a medical clinic.<sup>44</sup> At the medical clinic, later called Clínica de Montes Claros [Monte Carlos Clinic], three doctors provided volunteer service, including the mayor of the city, who was also a doctor. In that same year, camp meetings were held in Montes Claros under the direction of Pastor César Augusto da Costa.<sup>45</sup> At the

end of 1966, 28 people were baptized as a direct result of the Luminar II working in the northern region of Minas.<sup>46</sup>

During the second half of the 1960s, the educational work took new steps in the region. In 1967, the Adventist Countryside Luminar Institute started operating in the village of Remansinho in the region of the city of Januária. In July of that year, the school already had a classroom building, dormitory, grocery store, industry, houses, and a church. In the school church, there were 100 baptized members. In that same year, the Montes Claros elementary school had more than 100 students enrolled, had enlisted four teachers, and offered a high school admissions course.<sup>47</sup>

In 1968, the East Brazil Union Conference organized the Alto São Francisco Mission (which ended in 1971), and its territory included the entire northern part of Minas Gerais. Headquartered in Pirapora, the mission covered cities such as Pirapora, Montes Claros, Itacarambi, and Paracatu.<sup>48</sup> In January 1969, the mission had five churches organized and 682 Adventists.<sup>49</sup> Similar to the evangelistic work, the medical work had also progressed. On June 10, 1969, the Alto São Francisco Mission inaugurated a medical and dental clinic in Pirapora. Operating in a new building specially built for this purpose, the clinic had a doctor's office, pharmacy, small surgery room, dental room, and food storage in addition to serving as an elementary school as well.<sup>50</sup>

In July 1969, the first Biennial Assembly of the Alto São Francisco Mission was held at the Countryside Luminar Institute in Remansinho. The meeting, which was attended by 300 representatives from the mission districts, elected Pastor José Fernandes de Oliveira as its president, with Plínio Lourenço Souza as secretary. In the same year, the Adventist message reached the city of Mirabela in the north of Minas Gerais through a conference held by Pastor Haroldo Soldani and a series of studies carried out by worker João Castro. In November of that year in Mirabela, a Sabbath School was happening with 22 people, of whom 11 were baptized.<sup>51</sup>

In 1969, the Adventist work was advancing in other parts of northern Minas Gerais. The Adventists of Paracatu, for example, led by worker João Castro, received a piece of land from city hall to start constructing the church building. In Unaí, the congregation also gained a land and another 10,000 bricks for the church. And in the municipality of Pedras de Maria da Cruz there was a group of 52 Adventists who had recently organized into a church. Also in 1969, the cities of Paracatu and Montes Claros started to broadcast the radio program *The Voice of Prophecy*.<sup>52</sup> At that time, the elementary school of the Central Church of Montes Claros was the largest in the mission with 200 students enrolled.<sup>53</sup>

In January 1970, there were five organized churches and 920 Adventists in the mission's territory.<sup>54</sup> Within that same period, the Adventist group in Mirabela had 19 baptized members, and the construction work of the Adventist church in the city was making rapid progress.<sup>55</sup> Reports from other cities in the same period were also inspiring. The church in the Major Prates neighborhood in Montes Claros, for example, was already in the final stages.<sup>56</sup> In May 1970, the Januária church baptized 20 people as a result of the work of Branch Sabbath Schools.<sup>57</sup> With Pastor Ariel Barcellos serving as commander, the Luminar II vessel served an average of 3,000 people per

month,<sup>58</sup> and reached more than 6,000 people on one of its missionary trips.

The year of 1970 also recorded the beginning of the Adventist work in two other locations: the city of Grão-Mogol and the village of Fabião in Januária. In December of that same year, 15 people were baptized in Grão-Mogol, and in Fabião, a church of 15 members was getting ready for the construction of their temple.<sup>59</sup> In January 1971, the Alto San Francisco Mission had five churches organized, and the number of Adventists rose to 1,095.<sup>60</sup> In the church of Pedras de Maria da Cruz, there were 61 baptized members in February 1971 and a total of 114 students enrolled in their Sabbath School. During the same period, plans to build a church in the municipality of Luislândia were already underway. And in the city of Salinas, an Adventist named Alaíde Pena acquired land for building a church.<sup>61</sup>

In early 1972, the East Brazil Union Conference underwent a geographical reorganization, and the Alto São Francisco Mission's territory became part of the Minas Mission. In the northern territory of Minas Gerais, missionary work continued to advance. In November 1972, for example, the church of Salinas was inaugurated. More than 28,000 people were served by the Luminar II in the first three quarters of the same year.<sup>62</sup> In addition to evangelistic and membership advances, northern Minas Gerais also made advances in the Adventist educational work during the 1970s. In 1976, the Montes Claros Adventist School, which until that year only functioned as an elementary school linked to the church, was reopened, and was under the administration of the Education Department of the Minas Gerais Mission.<sup>63</sup>

In 1979, the Montes Claros school offered educational teaching up to the 6th grade of elementary school.<sup>64</sup> In October of that year, the school building was renovated and the classrooms enlarged.<sup>65</sup> In the same period, the city of Janaúba was chosen as the center for preaching the Adventist message with a team led by Pastor Joel Meireles and worker Pedro Gomes da Luz. This city was considered the center of economic development in the northern region of Minas.<sup>66</sup>

In January 1980, all the work done by the Minas Gerais Mission helped the mission to have 37 organized churches and 12,639 Adventists.<sup>67</sup> In the same month, the East Brazil Union Conference held its 11th Quadrennial Assembly, which reorganized the mission fields that made up the union. From this Assembly, the Minas Gerais Mission was comprised of only the state of Minas Gerais.<sup>68</sup> Also from the 1980 school year, the Montes Claros Adventist School started offering the 7th grade of elementary school.<sup>69</sup>

In Unaí, Pastor Elias Coutinho started a series of meetings in the late 1980s, and in February 1981, several baptisms had already been recorded.<sup>70</sup>

In December 1982, the Minas Gerais Mission underwent a new geographic reorganization, and its territory was divided into two missions: the Central Minas Gerais Mission headquartered in the city of Belo Horizonte, which started to manage churches in the central, western, and northern regions of Minas Gerais; and the South Minas Gerais Mission headquartered in the city of Juiz de Fora, which coordinated the care of the congregations in the south and east of the state. The construction of the Montes Claros Adventist School's own building was among

the goals anticipated to be achieved by the Central Minas Gerais Mission in its formation.<sup>71</sup>

Educational work in the region continued to advance, and in early 1986, a new school was inaugurated in the city of Buritis in the far northwest of Minas.<sup>72</sup> In May 1987, four pastors from the Central Minas Gerais Mission began a series of evangelistic meetings in different regions of the city of Montes Claros. As a result of this series, by October, a total of 222 people had been baptized.<sup>73</sup> In January 1988, the meetings resulted in 304 baptisms.<sup>74</sup> These efforts contributed to the fact that in January 1990, the Central Minas Gerais Mission began the year with 78 organized churches and 25,796 Adventists.<sup>75</sup>

In February 1991, the Central Minas Mission changed its name to the Central Minas Conference. Within the period of this move, the conference had 26,709 Adventist members spread across 300 congregations and 37 pastoral districts.<sup>76</sup> In the 1990s, evangelistic work in northern Minas Gerais began to develop on other fronts and ministries. In 1993, for example, a man named Manoel Barbosa and his wife were baptized in the city of Sete Lagoas, where they took up residence in the city of Três Marias, then considered the target of the Global Mission.<sup>77</sup> His house was transformed into a church, and that year new converts began to appear. Little by little, the new church grew, and the Adventists in the city rented a hall large enough to hold meetings and other events.<sup>78</sup>

Until 1993, the Luminar II had still been actively sailing on the São Francisco River and its affluents with Pastor Dido Pereira Santos as commander and director.<sup>79</sup> Annually, the Luminar traveled from Pirapora to the city of Manga on the border between Minas Gerais and Bahia, going through the cities of Pirapora, São Romão, São Francisco, Januária, and Itacarambi. The average service provided by the vessel was now around 700 to 800 people each month.<sup>80</sup> In 1995, Luminar II concluded its activities on the São Francisco River.<sup>81</sup> That same year, Adventists from Montes Claros began a work with prison inmates in the city. This work, developed in partnership with the Civil Police and the local delegation, resulted in 19 baptized inmates. The new converts from the prison were allowed to attend church when properly escorted.<sup>82</sup> In March 1996, the church of Três Marias was inaugurated, and on that occasion, two people were baptized.<sup>83</sup>

In April 1998, the city of Itacarambi in the north of Minas Gerais received a new Adventist church building, donated by a former mayor of the city. The mayor pointed out that the Adventist lifestyle had the ability to promote happiness and appreciation of good health. The building had the capacity to hold 200 people.<sup>84</sup> As a result of evangelistic efforts during the 1990s, in January 2000, the Central Minas Gerais Conference had about 38,899 Adventists and 150 organized churches.<sup>85</sup> In 2001, the territory comprising the East Minas Gerais Conference was Central Minas and South Minas conferences was reorganized into the Central Minas and South Minas conferences. As a result of the splitting its territory, in January 2002, CMC originally had 128 organized churches and 30,580 Adventists,<sup>86</sup> and that grew into a total of 31,383 Adventists and 148 churches in January 2005, just three years later.<sup>87</sup>

In 2007, the Central Minas Conference and East Brazil Union Conference combined to host a big evangelistic effort in the north of Minas Gerais. The project, named “Rota do Poder” [Route of Power], was inspired by the 2005 General Conference Assembly held in the city of St. Louis in the United States. Between June 25<sup>th</sup> and July 1<sup>st</sup>, a caravan of musicians and pastors toured several cities in Minas Gerais, including Januária, Salinas, and Montes Claros, resulting in several baptisms. In Januária, about 2,000 people attended the event conducted in the Sesc gymnasium, and in Montes Claros, 7,000 people attended the evangelistic meeting there.<sup>88</sup> In January 2010, the Central Minas Conference (AMC) had 33,956 Seventh-day Adventists and was in charge of the West, Central, and North regions of Minas Gerais.<sup>89</sup> From that year on, the need for a new administrative unit was noted.

## Mission Organizational History

In 2010, AMC voted to forward a request to the East Brazil Union Conference (EBUC) to study the creation of a new field within the territory.<sup>90</sup> After receiving the request from AMC, Southeast Brazil Union Conference forwarded the request to the South American Division (SAD). The need to create this new field was justified by the large number of pastoral districts in the Central Minas Conference and a challenging geographical extension, which was making it difficult to serve churches, members, and their families. In response, SAD management appointed a survey board made up of Erton Köhler, Magdiel Perez, and Marlon Lopes from the Division; Maurício Lima, Leônidas Guedes, and Volnei Porto from UEB; Ursulino Freitas, José Marcos, and Eliézer Magalhães from AMC; pastors Forlan Oliveira and Pedro Pereira; and lay members Ataídes Tavares França, and João Castro. As invited members, pastors Antônio Tostes and Edward Heidinger also participated.<sup>91</sup>

Two years later (2012), the South American Division accepted the report of the survey board that recommended the creation of the North Minas Mission (MMN) that would be headquartered in Montes Claros in the north of Minas Gerais, with the mission to serve the Adventist Church in the region with more efficiency. In that same year, the East Union convened the Creation and Organization Assembly of the new field, which took place at the Montes Claros Central Adventist Church on November 15, 2012. At the meeting, delegates elected pastors Hiram Kalbermatter as president, Elias Malaquias dos Anjos as secretary, and professor Leandro Ferreira de Brito as treasurer of the new field. The Mission started its activities on January 1, 2013.<sup>92</sup>

In addition to the president, secretary, and treasurer, the Nominating Board that had been established at the MMN creation meeting also elected Andreia Luna dos Anjos to oversee the ministries of Women, Children, Adolescents and the Women's Area of the Ministerial Association (AFAM); Sidinei Silva Santos as leader of the Publications, Spirit of Prophecy and Denominational Literature and Health departments; Reones Alves Nunes, to lead the Personal Ministry, the Sabbath School, the Christian Stewardship ministry, and the Evangelism area; and Forlan Fernandes de Oliveira as leader of the Youth Ministry, the Ministry of Pathfinders and Adventurers,



the Ministry of University Students, the Ministry of Music, and the Department of Religious Liberty. Furthermore, Pastor Hiram Kalbermatter was chosen to oversee the Global Mission and Communication departments; Elias dos Anjos managed the Ministry of Home and Family and served as the leader of the Ministerial Association; and Leandro Ferreira de Brito was the leader of Adventist Heritage Expansion, Education, and Solidarity Action.<sup>93</sup>

Also, on November 15, 2012, the headquarters of the North Mine Mission was inaugurated at its present address. When it started operating, the mission had 60 churches, 11,648 members, and 2,193,422 people in its territory.<sup>94</sup>

On November 15, 2016, departmental administrators and leaders were appointed, as is the case every four years in SDA conferences and missions. Pastor Claudiney Santos was appointed president and was responsible for the Global Mission Department; Pastor Elias Malaquias for Ministerial Secretary and Association; Professor Leandro Brito for Treasury, Heritage Expansion and Education; Felipe Carvalho for Christian Stewardship, Family and Communication; Andréia Luna for the Ministry of Women, AFAM, Children and Teenagers; Reones Nunes for Evangelism, Sabbath School and Personal Ministry; and Deusdeth Filho for Youth, Pathfinders, Adventurers, Music and University Students.<sup>95</sup>

On February 3, 2019, the cornerstone of the new Montes Claros Adventist College was laid. Adventist leaders from Minas Gerais, Espírito Santo, and Rio de Janeiro as well as councilors from the city of Montes Claros were present.<sup>96</sup> The 3,000 m<sup>2</sup> plot of land, located in the Morada do Sol neighborhood, had been acquired in 2017.<sup>97</sup>

The North Minas Mission has given special importance to the Small Groups project,<sup>98</sup> which emphasizes communion, relationship and mission among church members. In 2015, for example, a Small Group in the city did not meet in a house or church, but at the headquarters of an institution focused on the care of cancer patients. Led by the photographer Demetrius Lima, the Small Group had about 40 participants in its meetings, studying the Bible, making interaction dynamics, offering help and emotional comfort.<sup>99</sup>

Along with the work of Small Groups, the North Minas Mission also emphasizes other evangelism projects that seek to fulfill the main mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church: to preach the Gospel to all people. In 2012, a group of Adventists led an evangelistic series in the Quilombola community of Palmeirinha in the city of Pedras de Maria da Cruz. The first meetings were held under a tree. After some time, they bought land by the road and started to build a temporary meeting hall. As a result of this work, 15 people were baptized in 2014 after Holy Week, and at the end of the same year, the interior of the church was completed. In July 2018, the community's Adventist church was inaugurated in the presence of the mission leaders.<sup>100</sup>

Two other churches were inaugurated in the city of Januária in 2019 as a result of the church planting work. The first one, Boa Vista, began its activities in the homes of Adventist members, and then in a rented room. The second, Vila Jadete, started its activities in 1991 in a former room that belonged to a bar. The bar owner, José Lopes, received the Adventist message and was baptized. In 1998, this congregation moved to the current church building. However, the building had deteriorated due to time, then was renovated and reinaugurated in

November 2019.<sup>101</sup>

In May 2018, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, represented by the North Minas Mission, was awarded by the Montes Claros City Council in recognition of their project Impacto Esperança [Hope Impact].<sup>102</sup> The awarded project was designed by Councilman Soter Magno and was approved by the 23 members of the Montes Claros City Council. On that occasion, parliamentarians, MMN leaders, and members of the churches of Montes Claros were present.<sup>103</sup>

Another highly encouraging project is the 2019 version of Impacto Esperança [Hope Impact], performed in a different way by the Montes Claros' Adventist youth. Along with uplifting books, they also presented homeless people with hygienic kits and a snack.<sup>104</sup> Mission office servants also participated in the delivery in the district of Água Boa. There, about 1,500 books were distributed. The delivery was part of a project to establish an Adventist church in the locality, conducted by MMN's own employees. The Água Boa project resulted in 54 people studying the Bible.<sup>105</sup>

The North Minas Mission is also focused on its social and humanitarian role, and that included honoring the beautiful work done in the past by the Luminar vessel. In a campaign for the 2019 Christmas Taskforce,<sup>106</sup> members of the Santa Laura Adventist Church in Montes Claros collected 400 kilograms of food in just one day.

<sup>107</sup> A few days later, volunteers from the Renaissance Church collected another 100 kg of food in just one hour.  
<sup>108</sup>

Since its creation, MMN has experienced good growth in the number of members there. In January 2015, for example, the Mission had 12,229 Adventists and 63 organized churches.<sup>109</sup> In 2017, that number had risen to 13,142 members and 72 churches.<sup>110</sup> A year later, in June 2018, there were 14,826 Adventists in the territory.<sup>111</sup> The expectation is that in the next two years 26 new congregations will be established, 15 of them in cities currently without an Adventist presence. In this regard, the North Minas Mission will rely on volunteers who have already received a kit of materials to carry out this evangelistic work.<sup>112</sup>

Even with the growth in the number of its members, the North Minas Mission has some challenges to be overcome in the coming years. The main one is to establish at least one Adventist congregation in each of the 27 cities where isolated Adventist families already reside. In these Global Mission cities, Adventist Volunteer Service <sup>113</sup> will be one of the tools used for evangelism and church building.<sup>114</sup>

The main obstacle, however, is the region's socioeconomic environment. Currently, the territory administered by the North Minas Mission is considered to have the lowest per capita income in the entire Southeast Brazil Union Conference. Along with this, the distances between cities are already adding to the natural challenges. However, despite these limits and challenges, the mission maintains considerable growth.<sup>115</sup>

## Chronology of Administrators<sup>116</sup>

Presidents: Hiram Rafael Silveira Kalbermatter (2013-2014); Claudiney Cândido dos Santos (2014-2018); Moisés Dias de Carvalho Júnior (2019-present).

Secretary: Elias Malaquias dos Anjos (2013-present).

Treasurer: Leandro Ferreira de Brito (2013-2017); Elias Dias (2017-2019); Iran Vieira (2019); Luís Carlos Ribeiro (2019-present).<sup>117</sup>

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29. Werner Bleck, "Organização do Grupo de Montes Claros" [Montes Claros Group Organization], 12.
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