

North Caucasus Mission

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North Caucasus Mission is a part of the Caucasus Union Mission in the Euro-Asia Division of Seventh-day Adventists. It was organized in 2001, and its territory was reorganized in 2017. Its headquarters is in Mineralnye Vody, Stavropol Territory, Russian Federation.

Territory: Azerbaijan; the federal republics of RSO-Alaniya, and Stavropolsky Kray; and the republics of Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetiya, Kabardino-Balkariya, Karachaevo-Cherkessiya.

Statistics (June 30, 2021): Churches, 38; membership, 2,123; population, 20,707,498.¹

Origin of Adventist Work in the Territory of the Mission²

The first Adventist community was founded by Feofil (Theophilus) Arsentievich Babienko (1850-1942) in the city of Stavropol in the late 1880s.

In the mid-1870s Feofil Babienko served as a choir director in an Orthodox Church near Kiev. He received permission to study the Bible at home and began to meet with neighbors in the evenings for reading the Bible. Soon enough, Babienko realized that many of the teachings of the Orthodox Church were in contradiction with the Holy Scriptures.

In 1877 Babienko and his fellow brothers left the Orthodox Church and called themselves *The Community of Brothers Who Study the Word of God*.³ This society grew and spread in other cities and villages of Ukraine and soon decided to build a church. They sent their leader Babienko to the Governor-General of Kiev to receive the



North-Caucasus Mission (CaUM) Headquarters

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necessary permission. But Feofil Babienko never returned to them. He was arrested and sent to the city of Stavropol. Here, being in exile, he purchased the Bible and after two years of study began to observe the Sabbath and wait for the second coming of Jesus Christ.

In 1886 (or 1887), Feofil Babienko became one of the first Russian converts, who accepted Adventist doctrines. He was baptized by Pastor Conrad Laubhan, who came to Stavropol to visit the German colonists.

Conrad Laubhan (1838–1923), a native of one of the Volga German colonies called Shcherbakovka, while being in emigration to the United States accepted the Adventist message, thanks to the missionary work of Ludwig Richard Conradi. In May 1886, he returned to Russia and began to preach actively, first among the Volga Germans, and later in the Caucasus, in the Don region and in the Crimea.

Five of the local followers of Babienko were baptized in 1887, and another eight in 1888. Soon, in 1890, through the work of Babienko, the first Russian-speaking Adventist congregation was organized in Stavropol while groups of believers were forming in two nearby villages of Mikhailovka (now the city of Mikhailovsk) and Pelageevka (today the village of Pelagiada), not far from Stavropol⁴

Later Feofil Babienko was exiled from Stavropol to Armenia, but even there, near Mount Ararat, he continued his missionary work.

Organizational History⁵

From October 7 to 17, 1894, the third constituency meeting of the East European Field was held in Alexandrodar (now the village of Kochubeyevskoye, Stavropol Territory). At this meeting, for the first time in Russia, the ordination to the gospel ministry was carried out. H. J. Löbsack, who graduated from the Adventist training school in Hamburg in 1890 and served in the Caucasus, was ordained as a pastor.

On April 30, 1895, the fourth constituency meeting of the East European Field that was held in Alexandrodar under the guidance of Ludwig Richard Conradi appointed the preachers to different territories. A preacher for the Caucasus and the Don region was Jacob Klein. Responsibility for the Russian-speaking believers was rested on Mikhail Kuzmin, the first Russian elder of the Stavropol Church, who accepted the doctrine of the Sabbath, thanks to his contacts with Conrad Koch, a German exiled for his religious beliefs to Stavropol from the Samara Governorate.

In 1917 the Stavropol Church had 59 members and, as noted by H. J. Löbsack, was reminiscent of “a city standing at the top of a mountain, from where the light was spread to the most distant places of exile in Transcaucasia.” Thanks to the ministry of the Stavropol brethren, other Adventist congregations would begin.

In 1928 one of the first Adventist churches was organized in the town of Prokhladny, Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria. In 1945 the center of Adventism in that republic moved to the town of Nartkala. The first ministers in Kabardino-Balkaria were Mikhail S. Zozulin, Ivan F. Parashchuk, and Dmitry V. Chikivchuk.

In 1956 Pastor Peter G. Titkov moved to Pyatigorsk, where there were five Adventists at that time. He succeeded to organize a church in 1958, and his ministry was afterwards continued by Pastors Ivan P. Kozar (from 1968 to 1978), Ivan M. Babich (from 1978 to 1986), and M. G. Oleynik (1986 to 1992). The prayer house for the Pyatigorsk Church was purchased in the village of Konstantinovskaya.

The church in Pyatigorsk became the mother congregation for many nearby cities in the Stavropol Territory. So, for example, a congregation in the village of Kapelnitsa was separated from the Pyatigorsk Church in 1992, and already in 1995 they conducted the worship services in their new chapel. Later the daughter churches were organized in the village of Yuts and the towns of Essentuki, Kislovodsk, Lermontov, Mineralnye Vody, and Zheleznovodsk.

In the 1960s an Adventist congregation was organized in the city of Grozny. On September 24, 1980, it was officially registered by local authorities and had 76 members in the best of times. The church existed until the beginning of the war in 1994, when the members had to flee to the Stavropol and Krasnodar Territories.

In 1971 Pastor Yury V. Moritz arrived in the town of Maysky, Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria, where later an Adventist congregation was organized.

In 1985 Pastor G. P. Titkov, together with his family, moved to the city of Nalchik, Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria, where there were only four church members who usually had to go to the town of Nartkala on Saturdays to attend the worship services in the local church. After a short time those members began to meet for worship in the house of Pavel Sudarev, who had visited the Nartkala congregation from 1980. In 1986 the Nalchik Church was organized and six years later it numbered 45 members.

In 1989 the congregation in the city of Makhachkala (Dagestan) was organized and served by Pastor Abraham Bush. Soon the construction of a prayer house began. In 1991, also with the help of Abraham Bush, a church in the city of Kaspiysk was planted.

In the 1990s the truth of God began to spread rapidly throughout the cities and towns of the North Caucasus. In 1992 evangelistic campaigns started in Stavropol with participation of such preachers as Douglas Batchelor (1992), Nelson (1994), Daniel Reband (1996), Mikhail Oleynik (1998), Vladimir and Lyubov Predolyak (1999), Luni Rangelovich (2000), and Alexey Plakhota (2004). All these events resulted in the baptism of over three hundred persons.

In the autumn of 1996, after the evangelistic program of Daniel Reband, the second church was organized in Stavropol. From 1996 to 1999 it was headed by Pastor Pavel M. Bondarev.

The North Caucasus Mission (NCM) was organized on November 6, 2001 due to the reorganization of the North Caucasus Conference. Initially it included the territories of the Russian Federation (Stavropol Territory and the republics of Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, and North Ossetia-Alania). In November 2017 the Republic of Azerbaijan also became a part of the North Caucasus Mission.

Today the North Caucasus Mission comprises 38 churches and 16 companies with 2,187 members who are awaiting the second coming of Jesus and proclaiming the three angels' messages. Because the NCM territory includes some republics with a predominantly Moslem population, the denominational work has a specific character that takes into account cultural experiences of native peoples. For all that, the NCM is the leader in the distribution of printed Adventist literature. For example, according to the results of the realization of the missionary project on the distribution of Ellen G. White's book *The Great Controversy*, the North Caucasus Mission came out on top among all ESD conferences and missions. Today the NCM administration also places emphasis on establishing Adventist educational institutions for children.

List of Presidents

L. Plakhota, 2002-2006; N. S. Chekelek, 2006-2008; V. A. Yaganov, 2008-2017; N. S. Chekelek, 2017-Present.

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. "North Caucasus Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (2021), <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/entity?EntityID=10073>.
2. H. J. Löbsack, *Velikoye Adventistskoye dvizheniye i Adventisty Sed'mogo Dnia v Rossii* (Rostov-na-Donu: Altair, 2006), 160-162, 167.
3. V. V. Teppone, *Iz istorii Tserkvi Adventistov Sed'mogo Dnia v Rossii* (Kaliningrad: Yantarnyy Skaz, 1993), 8, 10, 11.
4. Ibid.
5. Löbsack, 160-162, 167.

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