Alagoas Mission

ALEXANDRE ACIOLE SALUSTIANO

Alagoas Mission (ALAG) is an administrative unit of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA), located in the territory of the Northeast Brazil Union Mission (NEBUM). Its headquarters is at Avenida Presidente Roosevelt, no. 167, zip code 57040-600, district of Serraria, in the city of Maceió, state of Alagoas, Brazil.

The state of Alagoas is located in the northeast region of Brazil and borders the states of Pernambuco to the north and northwest, Sergipe to the south, Bahia to the southwest, and the Atlantic Ocean to the east. The landform of this state consists of the coastal plain to the east, plateau to the north, depression in the midwest, and higher portions in the far west. The climate is tropical, humid on the coast and semi-arid in the center and west. The vegetation is composed of coastal mangroves, rainforest, and caatinga in the semi-arid region.

The name of the state was chosen due to the hydrography of the region, which has 19 lakes. The largest ones are the Lakes Mundaú and Manguaba. The main river is Sao Francisco, which is also one of the major Brazilian rivers. Alagoas also has beautiful blue-pool beaches and warm waters. The main economic activities of the state by sector...
The growth of the Church in the state of Alagoas awakened a dream. Besides the plans for dividing the former SGAM missionary field. The latter, before becoming Alagoas Mission, was named Sergipe-Alagoas Mission (SGAM). The work of Zacharias and his family was so fruitful that, later, 10 former members of a Protestant church and some former Catholics joined the canvasser's group. Sometime later, more than 30 people had converted to Adventism. Zacharias stayed at the director's house for five days, until he was allowed to preach in the church under conflict. When Zacharias spoke to the members of the group, it was clear that he was not resonating with the ideas discussed there, which was enough to prevent him from returning.

After reporting what had happened to the church administration, Zacharias was advised to move immediately to Maceió to work to reverse the situation. Thus, he moved with his family on October 13, 1914. To receive them, the group director (whose work had caused the whole problem) was present.

In 1908, Pastor Spies received brother Costa's invitation to go to Alagoas. Upon his arrival, he found 16 people who were already keeping the Sabbath. On December 3, 1908, four people were baptized, the first Adventist baptism in the state. Later, on the 8th, the first Adventist group of believers was organized in Maceió. However, a few years later, a crisis occurred among its members, and in mid-1914, the current group director, taking advantage of the difficulties that pastors faced to be present in the state, taught a set of doctrines contrary to Adventist beliefs. This man managed to confuse the members of the group and only one sister remained firm. With this crisis (that lasted for two years), plus the fact that other believers left the city for different reasons, the retrocession of the gospel preaching and consequent decline of SDAs in the region was expected. The church leaders, realizing that there was something wrong, sent the canvasser. Zacharias Martins Rodrigues (who had worked in the state of Pernambuco) to Maceió. Arriving there, he visited the mentioned group to analyze its situation and give an authentic opinion to SDA leaders.

After this impediment, Zacharias changed his strategy. He began to organize regular worship services in his residence, located on the same street as the hospital, no. 71. After a few days of meetings, he had 18 members who left the divergent group and returned to the Adventist Church, leaving only seven followers of the erroneous doctrines. These were the first positive results of the spiritual battle that took place in Maceió at the beginning of the Adventist work in that city.

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On May 24, 1915, Pastors Spies and Manoel Kümpel arrived in Maceió and joined Pastor Ricardo Wilfart from Pernambuco. Together, the three performed an intense 10-day work in support of the work started by Zacharias. In this way, they managed to organize and solidify the Adventist Church in the capital of Alagoas, with many baptisms and a Holy Supper ceremony.

In order to continue this work, Pastor Kümpel moved to the state of Alagoas, since Zacharias had to travel to São Paulo to take part in a training course for Bible workers. From 1908 to the present day, the work of the SDA Church in Alagoas has been under the responsibility of various conferences, with many geographical configurations of the missionary field. The latter, before becoming Alagoas Mission, was named Sergipe-Alagoas Mission (SGAM).

**Origin of SDA Work in the Conference Territory**

The preaching of the Adventist message in the state of Alagoas began with a Brazilian navy nurse known as Mr. Costa, who was transferred from the state of Rio de Janeiro to Alagoas between 1907 and 1908. Previously, Costa had accepted the message in Rio de Janeiro and started to live accordingly, so that, by the time he moved, he began to preach in Maceió and the region, along with his wife, even without being baptized.

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Zacharias stayed at the director's house for five days, until he was allowed to preach in the church under conflict. Upon obtaining authorization, he took the opportunity to combat the erroneous doctrines taught. Later, reflecting on this issue, Pastor Spies reported that it occurred out of ambition. When Zacharias spoke to the members of the group, it was clear that he was not resonating with the ideas discussed there, which was enough to prevent him from returning.

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and improving denominational support in Alagoas, the Adventist leaders and members of the state wanted to solve a geographical problem. With Alagoas being part of an administrative unit that managed the Adventist work in more than one state, the assistance to church members was limited.

In response to this reality of the church in Alagoas, and aware of the need of offering support to the Adventist expansion in the state, NEBUM, in a board meeting, requested (by NEBUM vote no. 2009-020) to the South American Division (SAD), on April 22, 2009, a Survey for redesigning SGAM.

In turn, the SAD accepted NEBUM's request and voted (SAD vote no. 2009-294) to create a survey committee to study the issue of SGAM reorganization. To compose this committee, administrators of SAD, NEBUM, and SGAM were appointed, along with two pastors and two lay members to study the possibility of reconfiguring the territory and creating a new mission. In the following year, NEBUM voted (NEBUM no. 2010-22) to accept the recommendations made in the survey committee's report that had opted for creating a new mission.

With the NEBUM's report accepted, between May 3 and 5, 2010, the South American Division considered the matter and received positively the terms of the report and the request from NEBUM for reorganization. The Division then authorized (SAD vote no. 2010-77) the reorganization of SGAM territory, changing the name of the former administrative unit to Sergipe Mission and starting the new one by calling it Alagoas Mission.

The Inaugural Assembly of ALAG took place on November 28, 2010, at the facilities of Serraria SDA Church in Maceió. The directors had previously been appointed by NEBUM to enable organizational work, whereas on that occasion the department leaders were chosen. Thus, the first ALAG leadership was comprised of: Otimar Gonçalves, as president; Orlando de Andrade, secretary; and Fausto dos Santos, treasurer. The department team was comprised of Soraia Braun (Women Ministries, Children's Ministries, Teens Ministries, and AFAM - Ministerial Spouses Association); Alexandre Aciole Salustiano (Evangelism, Global Mission, Sabbath School, and Personal Ministries); Antônio Carlos Barreto (Ministry of Education and ADRA); Edmílson dos Santos (Communication, Youth Ministries, and Club Ministries); Fábio Santana (Publishing Ministries); Jadson Rocha (Health Ministries and Stewardship Ministries); Orlando de Andrade (Ministerial Association); and Otimar Gonçalves (Family Ministries and Spirit of Prophecy).

ALAG began its activities on January 1, 2011, with the great task of leading 22,102 members, distributed over 200 congregations throughout the state of Alagoas. To develop the activities, a temporary site was chosen to house the mission, located in a rented building at Avenida Juca Sampaio, no. 527, Barro Duro district, in Maceió. The mission remained there until mid-2019 when it was transferred to its new building.

Before beginning construction of the new building, the mission administrative board, along with its pastors and servers, launched the foundation stone on December 13, 2015. This marked the dedication ceremony of the space that would receive the new headquarters in 2019. The words spoken at the event encouraged all those present and assured the church members of Alagoas that God's work would continue to go forward, seeking - through buildings and other resources - to fulfill well-defined missionary goals.

By God's grace, since its foundation, Alagoas Mission has been aligned with the discipleship project of its higher organizations. The CRM Project (Communion, Relationship, and Mission), for example, has been executed with prominence, both in NEBUM and in ALAG territories. The good progress of this program is measured by the fulfillment of five goals: (1) formation of new small group leaders, (2) Bible studies given, (3) newly baptized disciples, (4) faithful donors in tithes and offerings, and (5) planting new churches. Everything takes place inside churches organized in small groups, so as to facilitate pastoral care and missionary mobilization.

To keep the churches focused, ALAG annually promotes conventions for pastors, small group coordinators, and leaders. Alagoas Mission also develops missionary training for Bible instructors, missionary pairs, and evangelists, as well as quarterly training for Women's Ministries, Children's Ministries, Teens Ministries, and AFAM - Ministerial Spouses Association. Other meetings are also held periodically, such as training for church clerks, treasurers, Sabbath School leaders, and ministerial councils for elders, with the presence of theology scholars.

ALAG also carries out other projects. One of these projects is Hope Impact. Each year, Adventist members in Alagoas participate intensely in the program, distributing missionary books in various parts of the state. ALAG regularly carries out Hope Impact along with the “Passeata de Esperança” [Hope March], which extends from Ponta Verde Beach to the shore of Praia Pajuçara, in Maceió. This event features the participation of pastors, members, adventurers, pathfinders, young adults, students, and employees of Adventist schools as well as SDA supporters.

In some areas, mission employees and collaborators distributed hundreds of publishing materials in cities without Adventist presence, considered as Global Mission areas. Some of them were São Miguel dos Milagres, Jequiá da Praia, and Olho D'água das Flores. The same was done in some malls in the capital.

In another area, students and parents, along with teachers of the Adventist Educational Network of Alagoas participated in Hope Impact. This group merged two other projects with Hope Impact; the Super Leitores (Super Readers), to encourage reading in the city suburbs, as well as some health prevention projects. In this way they managed to impact the community of São Rafael, in the city of Maceió, with the message of hope.
Still concerning Hope Impact in Alagoas, the city of Maceió is always impacted in a very creative and energetic way. In 2016, a group of young people delivered books on trains. At first, this caused some surprise to the passengers who were not accustomed to such action, but they were immediately touched by the sincerity of the missionaries and willingly accepted the literature.39

ALAG administrators recognize the responsibility to lead and communicate with the youth of Alagoas. That is why the institution is always looking for ways to boost preaching and keep new generations of believers. Working on several fronts to reach this audience, the mission aims to lead them with the objective of “saving from sin and guiding in service.”

In this regard, one of the projects planned for children is the Adventurer Club.40 In Alagoas, there are 1,509 adventurers in 72 clubs.41 Among the main events held for this audience are camps. One of them took place between December 1st and 3rd of 2017 – this being the second Adventurer Family Camp of the mission42 in which 563 adventurers and many supporters joined the event.43

For teenagers, Alagoas Mission works with the Pathfinders Club,44 which celebrated, in 2018, 68 years of existence worldwide. As of September of the same year, there were 4,202 pathfinders in 137 clubs in the State of Alagoas. For every four Adventists, one was a pathfinder.45 Currently, there are 4,145 pathfinders, divided into 141 clubs.46

Similar to the adventurers, the pathfinders of Alagoas organize several camps. A major one was the First Pathfinder Camporee of Alagoas,47 held between September 12 and 15, in the convent center José da Silva Nogueira, in Maceió. More than 1,500 people attended the event, whose theme was “The Sanctuary in my heart,” leading the pathfinders “to reflect on their position in the world.” On the other hand, the II Pathfinders Camporee of Alagoas Mission, with the theme “On the trail of the chosen ones,” gathered 1,985 pathfinders, marking their lives with a unique experience. The event took place between November 8 and 11, 2016, at the place where the first camporee was held. At the opening Pastors Udolcy Zukowski, South America Pathfinders Director, and Rafael Santos, the current Pathfinder leader for the northeast region were present.48

In addition to the clubs for children and teens, ALAG also has a commitment to young adults. In the mission territory, there are 1,690 young adults registered in 163 clubs.49 These young adults have a system of small groups called PG (abbreviation for Small Group).50 In addition to missionary projects such as Caleb Mission51 and One Year in Mission,52 among others. Thus, ALAG continues to motivate the youth of its field to participate in its various programs with the purpose of encouraging them to grow in relationship with God and in service to others.

In this and other ways, ALAG has also been working intensively in Global Mission cities. As of June 2012, there were 26 municipalities across the state with no Adventist presence. To overcome this challenge, the mission works with the Leaders of Hope project, which takes care of planting new churches. One of the goals of this project is to encourage member loyalty through tithes and offerings. That is why, in a congress held in the city of Arapiraca, the mission launched a program called Pacto de Amor (Pact of Love), in which the members give a percentage of their income in a systematic and organized way, so the cities without Adventist presence may be reached. The congress gathered the church leaders in Alagoas, who promptly accepted the challenge and promoted the project in their local churches.53

The fruits of this work can already be seen. During a pastoral council held in February 2019, the mission administration learned that of the 26 municipalities of Alagoas without SDA congregations, 11 had already been reached, with only 15 remaining with no Adventist presence. These municipalities are: Carneiros, Feliz Deserto, Jacaré Homens, Jundiá, Monteirópolis, Olho D’água das Flores, Olho D’Agua Grande, Palestina, Pariconha, Piçabuçu, Porto Real do Colégio, São Brás, Senador Rui Palmeira, Tanque d’Arca, and Traipu.54 God has responded to these and other challenges with new missionary resources, one of which was received in 2018.

On December 16, 2018, pastors, leaders, and some SDA members met in Maceió with the purpose of promoting the launching in open TV the signal of TV Novo Tempo (Hope Channel Brazil) for the capital city. By then, the relay stations and other equipment had already been purchased.55 After a few months of prayer, work, and donations from Adventist members in Alagoas, on May 23, 2019, Maceió received the signal of Hope Channel Brazil on open TV. To celebrate this achievement, a thanksgiving worship service was held with the presence of political leaders of the city, along with some SDA administrative leaders. Through this channel, more than one million people can be reached in the metropolitan region of Maceió.56

Another important achievement occurred in 2019. On May 23, ALAG’s new administrative headquarters received its own building and permanent address. For the inauguration, a ceremony was organized with the presence of Pastor Ertón Köhler, SAD President, Pastor Moses Moacir, NEBUM President, and its personnel, political and military authorities, as well as pastors, leaders, and SDA members in Alagoas.57 At this event, ALAG’s mission was reinforced, “to make disciples of Jesus Christ who live as His witnesses of love and proclaim to all people the eternal Gospel of the three angels message, in preparation for His soon return.”58 In its 10 years of existence, ALAG has engaged in every possible evangelistic way to accomplish this mission.
To this end, ALAG continues to focus on fostering the multiplication of churches, following the motto: “Alagoas overcomes when people take care of people to fulfill the mission.” In this spirit, the goals for the coming years are: to encourage spirituality in the churches by the study of the Sabbath School Study Guide (Mana Project), family worship, attendance in church, and participation in small groups in the 305 congregations of Alagoas. The intention is to lead all 1,200 small groups to work in a holistic way (Communion, Relationship, and Mission), making them the channels by which the other activities of the church operate.

The mission also seeks a better balance between the revenues and expenses of the field by increasing the entries for the year 2020 by 10% (on average). The structural goals for the interior of the state and for the capital, Maceió, include: the opening of a Multibom shop outside the mission headquarters and renovating the facades in all 13 district headquarters of the capital. There are also plans for the opening of a new Adventist school and to expand the transmission of TV Novo Tempo [Hope Channel Brazil] on open TV for the city of Arapiraca.

ALAG understands the fundamental role of its canvassers to achieve all its goals and, therefore, continues to strive for a more stable board of full-time canvassers in the field. Under the premise that church members are as indispensable as canvassers, Alagoas Mission maintains a place for permanent formation of new leaders, through the project Líderes de Esperança [Leaders of Hope], involving an increasing number of missionaries. The field also works to strengthen the Total Member Involvement project, with the presence of the mission team at a district headquarters on the first Saturday of each month.

Over the years, ALAG has learned to recognize that “a mature and relevant leadership will only be possible through personal care,” as provided in small groups of pastors, visitation, social gatherings with leadership families, among other actions. In order for it to continue to be a reality, Alagoas Mission “seeks to strengthen its projects, to maintain a training center for new leaders, and to encourage Communion, Relationship, and Mission, so that more and more people are reached.”

List of Leaders


Secretaries: Orlando Lacerda de Andrade (2010-2014); Eliabe Carvalho de Benedicto (2014); Marcos Militão dos Santos (2015-current).


Sources


Felipe Lemos, “Lançado livro para motivar envolvimento total de membros na missão” [Book is released to motivate Total Member Involvement in the mission]. Adventist News, November 6, 2017.


Spies, F. W. “Brazil.” ARH, October 14, 1915.


NOTES


9. Leticia Oliveira, e-mail message to Adilson da S. Vieira (ESDA editorial assistant), April 24, 2019.


11. Leticia Oliveira, e-mail message to Adilson da S. Vieira (ESDA editorial assistant), April 24, 2019.

12. Ibid.


15. Ibid.


20. Evangelist canvassers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are the missionaries who “develop their ministry acquiring and selling to the public the publications edited and approved by the Church, with the aim of transmitting to their fellow men the eternal Gospel that brings salvation, and spiritual and physical well-being.” Accessed on August 30, 2018, https://bit.ly/2FCreIq.


24.

Ibid.?

Ibid.?


Ibid.?

Alexandre Aciole Salustiano, personal knowledge from working in Sergipe-Alagoas Mission and then in Alagoas Mission from 2007 to 2012.

The Ministerial Spouses Association is a branch of the Ministerial Association. It is intended to “serve the wives and the families of the church workers engaged in professional ministry. Women who work as Bible instructors and in other ministries are also assisted by AFAM.” Accessed on April 17, 2019, https://bit.ly/2t1XtxS.?


Ibid., 293.


“Hope Impact is a project that promotes reading and provides annual massive book distribution by the Seventh-day Adventists throughout the territory of the South American Division.” Accessed on April 18, 2019, https://bit.ly/389AQGG.


“Global Mission is the front-line branch of the Adventist Mission, a department of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. [...] The Global Mission projects begin as local initiatives. It supports the local initiatives of the front-line ministry in areas not yet penetrated [by the Adventist Church] and helps to involve all church departments in this task.” Accessed on January 15, 2020, http://bit.ly/35Wz9e0.

Adventistas Alagoas [Adventists Alagoas], “Impacto Esperança 2016 - Relatório Geral” [Hope Impact 2016 - General Report] [video of the reporting made by Hope Channel Brazil, June 9, 2016], accessed on April 17, 2019, https://youtu.be/beFPoQ2EB_g.

Ibid.?  

Ibid.?

“The Adventurer Club is a program for children between the ages of 6 and 9, created by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1972. [...] In the meetings the children carry out activities with the focus on physical, mental and spiritual development.” Accessed on January 16, 2020, https://bit.ly/389AQGG.


Dhara Zaynne, e-mail message to Adilson from S. Vieira (ESDA editorial assistant), April 18, 2019.

The Pathfinders Club is a “group of boys and girls between the ages of 10 and 15, of different social classes, colors, and religions. They usually meet, at least, once a week, to develop their talents, perceptions and a taste for nature.” These boys and girls “vibrate with outdoor activities. They like camping, hiking, climbing, explorations in the woods and caves. They can cook outdoors, make fire without matches.” Besides that, they demonstrate “skills with discipline through drill commands and have creativity awakened by the manual arts. They also fight against the use of smoking, alcohol, and drugs.” Accessed on October 9, 2019, http://bit.ly/2FDRqTh.


49. Dhara Zaynne, e-mail message to Adilson from S. Vieira (ESDA editorial assistant), April 18, 2019.

50. “Small group is a community of people who meet regularly with shared goals, in order to grow in the Christian experience as disciples of Jesus. It is an environment that promotes relationships and gives the opportunity for everyone to know each other’s names, pray together and to have a great get-together moment. It is open to people of all social classes, academic levels, ethnicities and religious orientation.” Accessed on January 13, 2020, https://bit.ly/2Rkia0i.


52. “One Year in Mission (OYiM) is a project that promotes the participation of young Adventists in the mission of evangelizing urban centers in eight South American countries, uniting their talents, resources and professional knowledge with the needs of the community.” Accessed on April 23, 2019, https://bit.ly/2scBG60.


54. Leticia Oliveira, e-mail message to Adilson da S. Vieira (ESDA editorial assistant), April 24, 2019.


58. South American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Working Policy 2019 (no publisher, 2019), 64.


61. Leticia Oliveira, e-mail message to Carlos Flávio Teixeira (ESDA assistant editor), July 25, 2019.


63. Leticia Oliveira, e-mail message to Carlos Flávio Teixeira (ESDA assistant editor), July 25, 2019.

64. Total Member Involvement is a project of the worldwide church, also called in some localities Meu Talento, Meu Ministério [My Talent, My Ministry]. This project aims to bring every SDA member “individually to understand how they can use their gifts to fulfill the evangelizing mission.” Felipe Lemos, “Lançado livro para motivar envolvimento total de membros na missão” [Book is released to motivate Total Member Involvement in the mission], Adventist News, November 6, 2017, access January 15, 2020, http://bit.ly/2NuUmVF.

65. Leticia Oliveira, e-mail message to Carlos Flávio Teixeira (ESDA assistant editor), July 25, 2019.

66. Ibid.


68. For more information about ALAG, access the website: https://MisAl.adventistas.org/ or social media: YouTube: Adventistas Alagoas; Facebook: @AdventistasAlagoas; Instagram: adventistasalagoas; Twitter: @missaolagocas.