

Nunes, Luiz

(1941–2020)

THE BRAZILIAN WHITE CENTER – UNASP

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Luiz Nunes

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Luiz Nunes, pastor, evangelist and teacher, was born on October 10, 1941 in Rio de Janeiro city, Brazil¹. Son of Tibúrcio Nunes (1916-1986) and Otelina de Mello Nunes (1916-1986), he had six siblings: Maria Lígia, Guilherme, Jorge, Sergio, Fernando Augusto (who died early), and Fernando de Mello Nunes².

Luiz Nunes began elementary education at *México* state school in 1948 and completed it at *Rodrigues Alves* state school in 1952. Afterwards he completed middle school at *Atheneu São Luiz* in 1957, and high school at *Dom Pedro I* in 1964.³ His main recreations in childhood and adolescence took place on the beaches of Rio de Janeiro. Many times, he preferred to be on the beach with his friends rather than to study.⁴

At 21 years of age, Luiz was introduced to the Adventist message through evangelistic meetings.⁵ While looking for the place of a traditional 'June celebration' party, Luiz and his friends passed by Matriz Street, where the auditorium of the Voice of Prophecy radio program was located. Pastor Enoch de Oliveira was preaching and, moved by curiosity, they entered and watched the whole sermon.⁶ After receiving Bible studies, Luiz was baptized by Pastor Rubens Dias on September 16, 1963, at the Adventist Church of Botafogo, Rio de Janeiro.⁷

Willing to share the precious message he had learned, a few months later Luiz began to give Bible studies in the Rio de Janeiro slums, leading many people to baptism.⁸ In 1965, he was invited to work as a Bible instructor for the Rio-Minas Conference, which at the time comprised the south of Minas Gerais and the entire state of Rio de Janeiro.⁹ The following year he worked in the city of Duque de Caxias, and in 1967, at the Central Church of Rio de Janeiro.¹⁰ In 1967 he married Yara Lúcia Coelho, at the church of Botafogo. The couple had twins: Alexandre Coelho Nunes and Sara Coelho Nunes, who were born on October 30 of the same year; in 1970 the couple separated.¹¹

By this time, he began a Languages undergraduate program at the Gama Filho University, Rio de Janeiro. On his third year of studies, in February 1972, Luiz accepted a call to be Portuguese teacher and Theology student at Northeast Brazil Academy (ENA), in Belém Maria, state of Pernambuco.¹²

On April 1, 1972 he married Maria Godinho in a ceremony held by Pastor José Monteiro. The couple had two children, Leonardo and Eduardo Godinho Nunes (stillbirth). Maria, better known as Lia Nunes, contributed to the Church by serving in various ministries. At Northeast Brazil Academy, she taught typing classes and was secretary to the institution's treasurer. She also taught English classes at the Recife Adventist School and Religion at Grão Pará Adventist Academy. In 1989, she contributed to the foundation of the music conservatory of the Northeast Brazil College, of which she was director and piano teacher. In addition, she organized choirs in many churches of the North and Northeast regions and was coordinator of the Women's Wing of the Ministerial Association, leading meetings and lectures aimed at preparing Theology students' wives for ministry.¹³

Luiz Nunes taught Grammar and Literature at secondary and higher education levels until graduating from Theology in 1974.¹⁴ In 1975 he began denominational work as a licensed minister at the former Northeast Brazil Mission, where until 1977¹⁵ he was pastor of the district of Natal, comprising almost the entire state of Rio Grande do Norte. During this period, he founded the districts of Igapó, Cidade Esperança¹⁶, Mãe Luíza¹⁷ and directed a Bible class for more than 140 interested people.¹⁸ On February 11, 1978, he was ordained to the ministry on the premises of Northeast Brazil Academy.¹⁹

Afterwards, he served as pastor for the district of Recife, state of Pernambuco, from 1978 to 1980. In 1980, he provisionally took over the Youth and Stewardship departments of the Northeast Brazil Mission, until accepting the invitation to lead the Evangelism department. By adhering the *Metropolitan Conferences* evangelism model that he had learned from Pastor Carlos Aeschlimann, Luiz obtained great results in North and Northeast regions of Brazil.²⁰

Under the leadership of Pastor José Bessa Filho, evangelist for the South American Division, he held his first metropolitan public evangelism in the city of Caruaru, Pernambuco. In a pioneering initiative, around 30 Theology students at Northeast Brazil Academy were invited to be part of this project. For the next 13 years of ministry, Luiz Nunes coordinated the work done by students, contributing to the establishment of a new emphasis in public evangelism and a new evangelistic method in this territory.²¹

In 1980, he began master studies at Brazil College (now UNASP-SP), completing them in 1983 with a dissertation entitled *O Reino de Deus: uma abordagem bíblica em Mateus 1 a 7* [The kingdom of God: a biblical approach to Matthew 1 to 7].²² Luiz served as a Ministerial director²³ and evangelist²⁴ in the Northeast Brazil Mission until 1982. In the following two years, he was Ministerial leader in the Central Minas Mission,²⁵ where he coordinated the Metropolitan Conference *Improving the World*, held in the city of Belo Horizonte, state of Minas Gerais. The project involved the training of hundreds of lay volunteers involved in 120 series of simultaneous evangelism.²⁶ In 1985, Luiz was appointed to work at the North Brazil Union Mission. That year, he led the Communication department and, from 1985 to 1987, he was in charge of the Ministerial department,²⁷ besides being the field evangelist.²⁸

During this period, Luiz held evangelistic conferences in the cities of Teresina, São Luiz and Belém, leading more than 3,000 people to baptism.²⁹ It was part of South American Division's plans, at the time, to promote a greater emphasis on public evangelism in the Theology seminars.³⁰ The good results achieved under Luiz Nunes' leadership led him to be called, in 1987, to teach the discipline of Evangelism at the Theology Seminary of Northeast Brazil College.³¹ Already as a teacher, he organized evangelistic series in Manaus, Rio de Janeiro, Jiparaná, Tabáina and Feira de Santana. Besides teaching, he was director of the seminary from 1994 to 1995.³²

In 1996 he was chosen by the South American Division to complete a doctoral degree at Brazil College (now UNASP-SP).³³ On March 23, 1998, Luiz defended his doctoral thesis entitled *Crises na Igreja Apostólica e na Igreja Adventista do Sétimo Dia: análise comparativa e implicações missiológicas* [Crises in the Apostolic Church and the Seventh-day Adventist Church: comparative analysis and missiological implications]. The examining board was chaired by Dr. José Carlos Ramos and Alberto Timm, in addition to other professors.³⁴ Luiz Nunes was the first student in Brazil to complete a doctorate in Theology from the Latin-American Adventist Theological Seminary.

In the second semester of 1998, he was reappointed as Theology teacher at Northeast Brazil College and, in 2000, he was elected as the Seminary director. Two years later, he left the board, but remained teaching until his retirement in 2005.³⁵ Besides subjects related to evangelism, Luiz also taught Adventism History, Spirit of Prophecy, Oratory, Acts and Epistles, Soteriology, Christology, Greek and Contemporary Religious Movements.³⁶ During his tenure as director of the seminary, he reorganized its statute and program content, in addition to giving start to the authorization process to recognize the Faculty of Theology before the federal government's Ministry of Education.³⁷

After his retirement, Luiz continued teaching the subjects of Christology, Pastoral Spiritual Formation and Universal Epistles until 2018. Over this period, he also contributed to the planting of two new churches in the city of Cachoeira, state of Bahia - one of them in the village of Capoeiruçu, next to Northeast Brazil College.³⁸ He lived there with his wife until his death on June 21, 2020.³⁹

Luiz Nunes made a relevant contribution to the Seventh-day Adventist Church through his pastoral work in Northeastern Brazil. As an evangelist, he coordinated public conferences in major cities, leading thousands of people to baptism. As a teacher, he taught several subjects at Northeast Brazil College, with an emphasis on the mission of proclaiming the gospel. He is kindly remembered for his more than 50 years of contribution to Northern regions of Brazil.

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NOTES

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