



Zimbabwe Central Union Conference headquarters.

Photo courtesy of Cremmar Mpofu.

Zimbabwe Central Union Conference

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Cremmar Mpofu, M.A.B.T.S. (Adventist University of Africa, Mbagathi, Nairobi, Kenya), currently serves as executive secretary of the Zimbabwe Central Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists with headquarters in Kwe-Kwe, Zimbabwe.

Formerly part of Zimbabwe Union Conference and organized in 2018, Zimbabwe Central Union Conference is a subsidiary church administrative unit of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division of Seventh-day Adventists. Its headquarters is in Kwekwe, Zimbabwe.

Territory: A portion of Zimbabwe; comprising the Central Zimbabwe, and North-West Zimbabwe Conferences.¹

Statistics (June 30, 2021): Churches, 1,093; membership, 328,518; population, 5,159,276

Zimbabwe Central Union Conference operates three boarding schools, nine day secondary schools, 26 primary schools, and three clinics.²

Overview

The Republic of Zimbabwe is divided into 10 administrative provinces, which are divided into 59 districts and 1200 wards.³ The country has 16 official languages. The country's main languages are Shona, spoken by over 70 percent of the population, and Ndebele which is spoken by about 20 percent of the population. English is the main language used for business.⁴ Harare is the capital city and the hub of economic activities in the country.⁵

Zimbabwe was a colony of the United Kingdom. During its colonial era it was known as Southern Rhodesia. Zimbabwe attained independence in 1980. The country's economy is based on three pillars, which are agriculture, mining, and tourism.⁶ The general population survives by means of subsistence farming which includes growing crops and rearing livestock.

Organizational History

Zimbabwe Union Conference

In November 1997 the Zimbabwe Union Conference was organized into a union conference with three local conferences and a combined membership of 259,848. By 2014 the Zimbabwe Union Conference's membership had increased to 803,521 resulting in the realignment of its three conferences into six in order to accommodate the needs of the growing membership. Membership continued to grow at an average annual rate of 32,000. In 2017 the union's membership reached nearly 903,000. This growth necessitated the realignment of the Zimbabwe Union Conference into smaller territorial and administrative units to improve the approach to mission and enhance effective outreach and discipleship methods. Chairing local conference meetings in six entities was becoming too difficult for the union conference leadership. The number of people attending union-wide meetings was becoming too large to manage. There was need to realign Zimbabwe Union Conference to create more entities for local missions to deal with some of the challenges and provide strategies to reach the extreme ends of the territories with the gospel.⁷⁸

The Zimbabwe Union Conference Executive Committee year-end meeting which took place on November 20, 2015, under the chairmanship of Dr. Micah Choga, included members present from Zimbabwe Union Conference (Enock Chifamba, executive secretary, Makhosiwonke Moyo, chief financial officer, Basil Hall, Fairchild Mhlophe, Bongani Ndlovu, Eugene Franch, Caston Shoko, Logan Masaiti, Felix Njini, Spiwe Chisewe, and Good-son Shumba), a representative of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, as well other delegates and

invitees from the six conferences. This meeting took an action to “realign Zimbabwe Union Conference into three unions conferences, and further recommended to the General Conference the realignment through the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division.”⁹

The Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division 2016 year-end executive committee meeting “voted to approve and pass on to General Conference the request from the Zimbabwe Union Conference to the General Conference Survey Commission to assess the realignment of its territory.”¹⁰ In 2017 year-end committee meeting of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, it was “voted to record the decision by the General Conference Executive Committee to realign Zimbabwe Union Conference into three union conferences.”¹¹ In the November 2017 constituency meeting the Zimbabwe Union Conference was realigned into three union conferences, namely Zimbabwe West, Zimbabwe Central and Zimbabwe East Union Conferences.¹²

Zimbabwe Central Union Conference

The organization of Zimbabwe Central Union Conference was the result of the realignment of the Central Zimbabwe Conference. Central Zimbabwe Conference had been organized as a subsidiary church administrative unit of Zimbabwe Union Conference in 1993 with 83 organized churches and 401 companies, 24 districts and a membership of 51,379. By the year 2000, the conference membership grew to 97,000. By 2013 it surpasses 122,000. The number of schools had increased from 20 to 34 schools.¹³ In 2014 the Central Zimbabwe Conference had 560 organized churches. Management then felt the need to divide the conference into two to ensure better administration of the work and provide better discipleship of the membership.¹⁴ In 2013, the Central Zimbabwe Conference took an action to recommend to Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division through the Zimbabwe Union Conference to realign the conference into two local conferences, namely, Central Zimbabwe Conference and North-West Zimbabwe Conference.¹⁵ In 2014, the Zimbabwe Union Conference Executive Committee took an action “to approve the realignment proposal of Central Zimbabwe Conference,” after the Survey Commission of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, which had come at the request of the Zimbabwe Union Conference Committee, had approved the proposal to realign the Conference.¹⁶

The Central Zimbabwe Conference territory was to consist of “Masvingo province and a portion of Midlands province. The southern part was covering an area stretching from Villa Sango to points west of Rutenga, Ingezi, Zvishavane, Adams, Shangani, and Msilahove West of Lower Gwelo. The northern part stretches from Sogwala to Mvuma, while the eastern side goes from Mvuma to the other part of Masvingo province which covers Gutu, Bikita to the border of Zimbabwe and Mozambique.”¹⁷ North-West Zimbabwe Conference territory was to “consist of a portion of Midlands Province, a portion of Mashonaland West Province and a portion of Mataberland North Province. It stretches from Chiwundura and Mvuma east of Kwekwe, to Silobela area, Nkayi, Dakamela Lusulu, Binga Siabua, Siakovu, and the stretch of 201 kilometers between Kadoma and Siakobvu toward the border between Zimbabwe and Zambia.”¹⁸

At its 2014 constituency meeting, the Central Zimbabwe Conference was realigned into two administrative units: Central Zimbabwe Conference and North-West Zimbabwe Conference. This increased the number of conferences in Zimbabwe Union Conference, and influenced its subsequent realignment in 2017!¹⁹ The Zimbabwe Central Union Conference was organized in 2017 as an attempt to minister to the population of 4,904,790 natives,²⁰ residing in the Midlands Province, Masvingo Province, part of Mashonaland West province and Matebeland North Province of Zimbabwe covering an area of 105,732 square kilometers. The first Zimbabwe Central Union Conference constituency meeting, held in November 2017, elected the following officers: Etwell Tapera, president; Eugene Fransch, secretary; and Bridget Sithole, treasurer!²¹

Future Outlook

Since its official establishment in 2018, Zimbabwe Central Union Conference has experienced tremendous growth. Its membership grew from 293,064 on June 30, 2017, to 328,518 on June 30, 2021. The number of churches has increased from 956 to 1,093. Gweru Dental Practise has been refurbished. Gweru Adventist Hospital is under construction as well as the Adventist College of Education, which will serve as a teacher training college.

Executive Officers Chronology

Presidents: Etwell Tapera (2017-)

Executive Secretaries: Eugene Fransch (2017-2021); Felix Njini (2021); Cremmar Mpofo (2021-)

Treasurers: Bridget Sithole (2017-)

SOURCES

Central Zimbabwe Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Gweru, Zimbabwe), "Realignment Preparation Document," 2014.

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NOTES

1. "Zimbabwe Central Union Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (2022), Zimbabwe Central Union Conference territory consist of part of Masvingo Province, part of the Midlands province, "bounded on by a line following roads, rivers and the railway line, . . . from Villa Sango to points west of Rutenga, Ingezi, Zvishavane, Adams and Shangani, and to points east of Nkayi, Dakamela, Lusulu and Binga and . . . from Kariba to but excluding Chegutu, to a point partway between Mvuma and Chivhu, and between Gutu and Buhera and between Bikita and Chipinge, on the border of Mozambique. This territory may be amended as deemed necessary by the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division." (Zimbabwe Central Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "Constitution and By-Laws of Zimbabwe Central Union Conference" [Kwekwe, Zimbabwe: Zimbabwe Central Union Conference], n.d., 1).
2. Ibid.
3. *Wikipedia*, "Districts of Zimbabwe," accessed January 25, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Districts_of_Zimbabwe.
4. *Wikipedia*, "Languages of Zimbabwe," accessed January 25, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages_of_Zimbabwe.
5. *World Population Review*, "Population of Cities in Zimbabwe," accessed January 25, 2022, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/cities/zimbabwe>.
6. *World Trade Organization*, "Zimbabwe," accessed January 25, 2022, https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tpr_e/s398_sum_e.pdf.
7. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics, *Annual Statistical Report* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2021), 5.
8. Micah Chogah, interview by author, November 11, 2021, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.
9. Zimbabwe Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Bulawayo, Zimbabwe), Minutes of the Zimbabwe Union Conference Year-End Executive Committee Meeting held on November 21, 2015), action number 15-056.
10. Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division of Seventh-day Adventists (Pretoria, South Africa), minutes of SID Executive committee meeting held in November 2016.

11. Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division of Seventh-day Adventists, Minutes of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division Year-end Executive Committee Meetings, (Pretoria. South Africa: Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, 2017).
12. Zimbabwe Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Bulawayo, Zimbabwe), Minutes of the Zimbabwe Union Conference Year-End Executive Committee Meetings on November 20-22, 2017, 44.
13. Central Zimbabwe Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Gweru, Zimbabwe), "Realignment Preparation Document," 2014, 2.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Zimbabwe Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Bulawayo, Zimbabwe), Minutes of the Year-End Executive Committee Meetings held on November 20-22, 2014), 15.
17. Central Zimbabwe Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Gweru, Zimbabwe), "Realignment document," 2014, 3.
18. Ibid., 12.
19. Zimbabwe Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Bulawayo, Zimbabwe), "Realignment Preparation Document," 2017, 5.
20. "Zimbabwe Central Union Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2021* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2021), 327.
21. Zimbabwe Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Bulawayo, Zimbabwe), Minutes of the Constituency Meeting Minutes," 2017, 45-46.

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