

Pinarena Mission

WALDO JOSÉ SANTOS

Waldo José Santos Serrano has been president of Pinarena Mission since 2019.

Pinarena Mission, established in 2019, operates under the [Cuban Union Conference](#) within the [Inter-American Division](#) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Its headquarters is located in Pinar del Río, Cuba.

The Province of Pinar del Río is one of the 15 provinces in Cuba, located on the western edge of the island and archipelago. This province covers an area of 801.7 km² and is home to 382,162 people, according to the 2022 census.¹ The waters of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea border the territory of the Pinar del Río Mission to the north, south, and west, and to the east it borders with the Province of Artemisa.

Pinarena Mission has 33 churches and 2,505 members. The offices are located at 67 Coronel Pozo Street, corner of Acueducto Street, Pinar del Río 20101, Cuba. Pinarena Mission is part of the Cuban Union Conference²

Origins of the Adventist Presence in the Territory

In the early 1900s, Mr. Styth, an Adventist who had been on the island of Cuba longer than any other Adventist, traveled to Bahía Honda and Guines, both in Pinar del Río at the time, to share the gospel of Christ's advent with all who would listen.³ It is unknown how long he stayed in those places and what his reach was in that large area of the island, but it is understood that he planted the seed of the Adventist Church, thus forming the first Adventist believers in that region.

In 1913, José Veiga, an Adventist from San Claudio, Bahia Honda, was spreading the message as he canvassed selling Adventist books. His work became noticed and, in 1916, he was invited by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists to study at what is now Washington Adventist University to become a pastor: "Voted, That Jose Veiga, of Cuba, be placed under provisional appointment in the Foreign Seminary Department of the Washington Missionary College for the coming school year."⁴

By the end of 1917, José Veiga was voted to return to Cuba as a licensed minister.⁵ He settled in Puerto Padre and was accompanied by his wife, Concepción Feliz, his sister-in-law Eva Feliz, and his three daughters, Ruth, Nohemí, and Elena. The three daughters played the piano, flute, accordion, clarinet, and saxophone. This proved to be a great blessing for the worship of God in the services and evangelistic meetings throughout the territory.⁶

On January 1, 1926, the preaching of the gospel started in Pinar del Rio, in a house on Cabada Street, now known as Comandante Pinares #18. The first believers invited a group of people to the meetings, and they accepted the gospel. The first baptism took place in June 1927 in the then-clean waters of the Guama River. Five people were baptized: Regla Asunción Hernández, Isabel Medina, Geraldina Álvarez, Antonia de la Paz Pérez, and Dulce María Vázquez Castillo. Pastor Pedro Cruz, the first Cuban pastor, officiated at those baptisms. Thus, the Adventist Church was established in Pinar del Rio.

From Cabada Street, the services moved to Calzada de la Coloma, now Rafael Ferro, in a location vaguely identifiable today. Through many difficult experiences and ordeals, the group continued to grow. Among those baptized were Bertha Fraguela; José Borrego, a sergeant in the army band who had to decide between his profession and faithfulness to God; Félix Benítez, a musician and teacher; Paula Amelia Beltrán; Ester Contreras; Gregorio Hernández; and Juanita Páez, who served as the church's treasurer until her death.

In 1929, the group of believers moved again to 132 Virtudes Street, between Calzada de la Coloma and Palma Street. Hortensia and Lucía Rodríguez, Luisa Hernández, and siblings Oscar, Leandro, and Josefa Rodríguez were baptized there.

The group of believers grew in many of the towns near Pinar del Rio. The decision was made to establish branch Sabbath Schools to serve the believers in those towns. These Sabbath Schools were established in:

Competencia – Among those who met at this location were the Rodríguez Páez, Hernández Guerra, and Rodríguez Abreu families.

Puerta de Golpe – The families of Carmela, Juan and Pascual Padrón, Antias Labrador, and Felipe Eleuterio Ruiz met at this location. In 1927, Antias Labrador donated his house for the construction of the Puerta de Golpe SDA Church.

Pedregal – Among the families who met at this location were those of Andrés Fraguela and José Lombao. The first Adventists members of the large and beloved de Armas Mora family also met at this location. Throughout the years, many Adventist Church workers came from this family.

Pino Solo – The Barrios and Miranda families met at this location.

Adventist churches exist today in Puerta de Golpe, Pedregal, and Pino Solo, where the message continues to be preached and God is worshipped.

By the 1950s, Pastor Ramiro Alonso was in charge of the congregation in the city of Pinar del Rio. They met in the pastor's house at Alameda #98, between Oeste Hospital (now Coronel Pozo) and Méndez Capote.

With much effort, construction began on the first Seventh-day Adventist Church in the city of Pinar del Rio. It was finally completed in 1952. Construction was directed by Manuel Duarte who, years later and already quite

old, was baptized into the Adventist Church.

That church located at 114 Alameda Street between Méndez Capote and Isidro Barredo streets had a modest tile roof, brick walls, and limited capacity for future growth. At that time, the church was led by Pastor Emilio Girado. Very close to the church stood a beautiful ceiba tree. For this reason, the first official Adventist Church in Pinar del Rio was known for a long time as “the Ceiba Church.” The ceiba tree was cut down in 1970 when Alameda Street was widened. As time passed, the seed of the gospel was sown in the different municipalities of the province of Pinar del Rio.

At that time, whoever was the pastor of the “Ceiba Church” also led the entire province of Pinar del Rio as well as all the churches that were being organized. The pastors from 1926-1989 included: José Veiga Romero, Victoriano Suarez, Manuel Ávila, Emilio Girado, Ramiro Alonso, Rogelio Campillo, Nelson Gómez (Dominican minister), Humberto Sánchez, Ángel Chávez, and Miguel León.

Events that Led to the Organization of the Pinarena Mission

In 1968, due to political issues on the island of Cuba, the Adventist Church in Cuba ceased to be part of the Antillian Union Mission and was organized into six provinces as the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cuba. One of those six provinces was Pinar del Río.⁷ From 1968 to 1988, Pinar del Río was under the direct administration of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cuba.

In 1989, the entire territory of Cuba was readjusted under the Cuban Union Conference, and the six provinces were united to form only three delegations: the West Delegation, the Central Delegation, and the East Delegation. The province of Pinar del Río became part of the West Delegation. The extensive territory of the West Delegation included the provinces of Pinar del Rio, Havana, and Matanzas, and in 1995, the City of Havana and the Special Municipality of Isla de la Juventud were added to the West Delegation.⁸

For transportation reasons and other causes, it was impossible to administer all of the territory that comprised the West Delegation. Around 2015, Cuban Union Conference was considering separating the province of Pinar del Rio from the West Conference. On February 25, 2016, the West Conference Constituent Assembly held a Special Session in which it was agreed to establish an Experimental Field in Pinar del Rio that was ratified by the Cuban Union Conference Board. With the necessary adjustments, by 2017, the Experimental Field began to operate out of the offices of a nearby church while its offices were renovated.

On Monday, November 26, 2018, Pinarena Mission opened its doors at the same location that had once been the headquarters of the Pinar del Rio Delegation. This building, which had served as the offices of the Pinar del Rio Delegation from 1968 to 1988 and as a pastoral home from 1989 to 2017, most recently has served as the office building for Pinareña Mission. On Monday, May 6, 2019, during a visit from the president of the Inter-American Division, Pastor Elie Henry, the Pinareña Mission offices were officially inaugurated.

In order to fulfill its mission, Pinarena Mission continues to inspire, instruct, and equip the pastors and lay members of the church to preach the gospel through seminars and meetings. It considers establishing congregations in the 11 municipalities not yet reached through the *Escuela de Luz* (School of Light) project in which lay members are trained to establish new groups. The mission also seeks to strengthen colportering and implement the *Escuela de Luz* project by assigning a church couple to settle in a new territory for the purpose of evangelizing the community and establishing a church.

Outlook

The administration of the Pinarena Mission, in an effort to better serve its community and its congregations, is working to purchase the adjacent lot to build much-needed offices for the various ministries and dedicate a space within the new building for meetings with pastors and laypeople. It also seeks to acquire suitable vehicles to facilitate access to its vast territory and reach out to communities with no Adventist presence through evangelistic campaigns. Another goal is to build a camp especially for Pathfinders and the youth, and also for spiritual retreats.

Presidents

Waldo José Santos Serrano (2019-)

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. "Pinar del Río," *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*, accessed August 11, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pinar_del_Río.
2. "Pinarena Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, accessed August 11, 2025, <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/entity?EntityID=54694>.
3. I. E. Moore, "Cuba an Open Field," *ARH*, March 9, 1905, 12.
4. One Hundred Eighty-Eighth Meeting General Conference Committee, "Jose Veiga," May 11, 1916, 424, accessed August 11, 2025, <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Minutes/GCC/GCC1916.pdf>.
5. Two Hundred Forty-Second Meeting General Conference Committee, "Jose Veiga to Cuba," (April 6, 1917): 578, accessed August 11, 2025, <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Minutes/GCC/GCC1917.pdf>.
6. S. E. Kellman, "A Church Organized in Cuba," *ARH*, January 26, 1922, 25.
7. "Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cuba," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1969), 174.
8. "West Delegation," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1995), 166.

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