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Central Uttar Pradesh Region

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Formerly part of Upper Ganges Section, Central Uttar Pradesh Region is a part of Northern India Union Section in the

Southern Asia Division of Seventh-day Adventists. It was organized in 2018. Its headquarters is in Uttar Pradesh, India.

Territory: The following districts in the central portion of the state of Uttar Pradesh: Auraiya, Banda, Baranbanki, Chitrakoot, Etawah, Farrukhabad, Fatehpur, Hamirpur, Hardoi, Jalaun, Jhansi, Kannauj, Kanpur Dehat, Kanpur Nagar, Lakhimpur Kheri, Lalitpur, Lucknow, Mahoba, Rae Bareilly, Sitapur, and Unnao.

Statistics (June 30, 2020): Churches, 6; membership, 742; population, 48,231,509.

The Central Uttar Pradesh Region of Seventh-day Adventists was formed by action of the Northern India Union Executive Committee on March 6, 2017, with 21 districts of Uttar Pradesh from the Upper Ganges Section, with two churches and ten companies; and it was approved by the Southern Asia Division Executive Committee which met May 21 to 30, 2018, with the headquarters to be at Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. This region has two zones: Avadh Pradesh and Bundelkhand Pradesh. Avadh Pradesh has 13 districts and Bundelkhand Pradesh has eight districts.

Early Adventist Work in Lucknow and Kanpur

The earliest Adventist presence in Central Uttar Pradesh was in 1890 when S. N. Haskell and P. T. Magan traveled across India by train looking for ways the Adventist message could best be presented in India. When changing trains at the Mughal Sarai railway station, Magan met a former schoolmate from England.¹ They spent a few days together in Benaras,² Lucknow, and Kanpur.³

The first pastor assigned to Lucknow was W. W. Miller. He and his family arrived in Lucknow on January 6, 1908. While visiting families and distributing literature, Miller found a man who had read several Adventist books and magazines, and he learned that these were being loaned by a man named Gomez. He met Mr. Gomez the next day and discovered that he had attended lectures by D. A. Robinson in Calcutta and had purchased a number of books which he proceeded to loan to others in Lucknow. Miller's cook distributed and sold literature in Hindi, Urdu, and Bengali.⁴

Since Lucknow was in a more central location than Calcutta, it was a good choice for the venue of the 1908 general meeting of the India Mission to which Adventist workers came from all over India.⁵ Miller was appointed representative of the reception committee and he warned delegates not to carry more luggage than permitted by the railways.⁶

Prior to the 1908 general meeting, H. J. Jewel conducted the first public evangelistic meetings in Lucknow, starting December 5. The general meeting commenced on December 25 and ended on January 4, 1909. At the close of the meetings the first Hindustani church was organized in Lucknow with 15 members who had responded to a call by Miller.⁷ Following the meetings, Amarnath, Isaac Samuel, and E. L. Gardner remained behind in Lucknow to sell literature and give Bible studies.⁸

In December 1909 work at treatment rooms and public evangelistic meetings commenced in Lucknow in order to arouse interest. However, realizing that a large English-speaking population lived in Lucknow, it was decided to continue the medical work.⁹ In December 1909 an English church was organized for the benefit of those who would be permanently located in Lucknow and for others who might find it convenient to attend regularly. Ten people participated in the organization of the English church.¹⁰

The Watchman Press was moved from Calcutta to Lucknow on January 17, 1909.¹¹ W. E. Perrin arrived in Lucknow on January 16 to connect with the publishing work.¹² J. C. Little returned to Lucknow in February to help install the Watchman Press.¹³

The Fourth Biennial Session of the India Mission met at Lucknow in 1910. At this time the India Union was organized as per the action of the General Conference. At this organization of the India Union, five missions were organized, one of them being the North India Mission which included the territories where people spoke Hindi, Bihari, Rajasthani, Punjabi, and Sindhi. The headquarters for the North India Mission was in Dwarikhel in Garhwal, where Luther Burgess, the mission superintendent, operated the Industrial School.

The India Union headquarters was located at 19 Banks Road, Lucknow beginning in 1911, though it was not until 1912 that Lucknow was selected as the permanent headquarters for the union and the publishing house. The change seemed desirable because Lucknow offered the following advantages: (1) climate superior to that of Bombay or Calcutta; (2) proximity of a hill station in Mussoorie; (3) availability of publishing supplies; and (4) cheap labor. It was also noted that Europeans who had lived there several years were in better health and that the city was an important center for the Hindi-speaking population of India.¹⁴

The change from rented quarters at 19 Banks Road to purchased property and a bungalow at 17 Abbott Road (now Vidhan Sabha Marg) was made in March 1912.¹⁵ The property was on one of the best streets in town, just 15 minutes from the railway station, and a short walk from the European shops. The one acre of land had enough space for buildings to accommodate the press and a church.¹⁶

Vera Chilton commenced Zenana work in Lucknow in 1912. She had around 50 pupils ranging in age from 12 to 30, and she taught them the Bible, in addition to reading, writing, and arithmetic. She also taught sewing and knitting. She conducted the classes weekly in Urdu.¹⁷ Mrs. Camphor, whose husband was connected with the press, also engaged in Zenana work.¹⁸

The India Union Christian Training School was established in Lucknow by I. F. Blue in 1915 and operated there until 1919. The formation of the Southern Asia Division in 1919-1920 resulted in moving the headquarters from Lucknow to Poona and in the closure of the training school. Thereafter, Lucknow declined in importance to the Adventist Church.

In 1938 P. K. Simpson decided to hold public meetings entitled "Good News Lecture Series," in Hindustani, with the help of musicians M. A. Paul, P. Charan, and the blind singer Lachman Das from Bugrasi. As a result, 25 Indians joined the Bible study class. That year Pastor Conley erected a new church on the Abbott Road property.¹⁹

The work in Cawnpore (changed to Kanpur in 1947) began with colporteurs. Joseph and H. A. Skinner canvassed there in 1916.²⁰

The first Sabbath School in Kanpur was organized by Lakes in April 1918. Attendance was usually six to ten members.²¹ The first pastor to be stationed in Cawnpore was O. W. Nolda in 1922.²² Nolda immediately set about conducting a major effort which resulted in a few baptisms that added to the few members already there. Mrs. Nolda started a church school at the same time.²³ Membership increased steadily and soon a larger hall was rented which seated 200.²⁴ The next resident pastor was J. B. Conley. He conducted a major public effort in 1927 which was well attended.²⁵ When Conley was transferred out in 1930,²⁶ Loasby from Lucknow traveled to Cawnpore on weekends to care for the company.²⁷ For several years Cawnpore was without a pastor.²⁸ A. E. Rawson held a huge VOP rally in the city in 1951 which was attended by more than 600 hundred people.²⁹ All these years only a Sabbath School was organized in Cawnpore and the Adventists' membership was held in the conference church.³⁰ Hunter reports in 1952 that many Adventists left Kanpur after 1947 and only a small Sabbath School remained.³¹

Possibly the most significant developments in Kanpur came in 1953. Besides a series of evangelistic meetings in English, there was another series in Hindustani. Pastor W. G. Jenson was the coordinator and Pastor I. M. Chand was the speaker. During the meetings, the church was organized. Pastor Ashlock gave the message and Pastor D. W. Hunter led out in the organization of the Kanpur church. On July 7, 1952, the church school was inaugurated. At this time the Kanpur church became the leading church in the Upper Ganges Mission.

Organizational History

When the Southern Asia Division was organized in 1919-1920, this region was part of the United Provinces Mission of the Northwest Union.³² In 1929 the mission was divided into the North Agra Mission with headquarters in Hapur, and the Central Agra Mission with the territory of Lucknow and Cawnpore (Kanpur).³³ In 1936, due to the effects of the economic depression which saw much administrative downsizing, the Central Agra Mission is listed as "unorganized" in the *1937 Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, and as part of the combined United Provinces Mission in the *1938 Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, with headquarters in Lucknow. The following year headquarters of the combined mission moved to Delhi.

In 1947 the mission was divided again into the North United Provinces Mission and the South United Provinces Mission. The South United Provinces Mission had territory lying south of the Agra railway line running from the border of Nepal to Bareilly and down to Mathura. It included the mission stations of Lucknow and Allahabad.³⁴ In 1951, without any territory adjustment, the name changed to Central Ganges Mission.³⁵ This was further adjusted to Central Ganges Section in 1954, but recorded the following year.³⁶

The North and Central Ganges Sections were combined in 1955 into the Upper Ganges Section with headquarters in Lucknow at first,³⁷ then temporarily in Hapur.³⁸ When the property at 27 Barakhamba Road was purchased in 1955, the Upper Ganges Section moved there. In 1961 headquarters moved from Delhi to Hapur.³⁹

The current Central Uttar Pradesh Region was formed by action of the Northern India Union Executive Committee on April 23, 2018.⁴⁰

Directors

Peter Paul (2018-present).

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