

South Austral Chile Conference

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South Austral Chile Conference is an administrative unit of the Seventh-day Adventist Church located in the most austral and extensive territory of the Chile Union Mission (UCh). Its headquarters operates at Claro Solar 1170 St. in the city center of Temuco in the capital of the Cautín province, Araucanía region, Chile¹

South Austral Chile Conference covers the IX Region of Araucanía until the XII Region of Magallanes, including the XIV Region of Ríos, the X Region of Lagos, and the XI Region of Aysén. The total area of the five regions that cover the ecclesiastical fields is of 339.647 km², and the population a total of 2,523,072 inhabitants² The number of Adventists is 21,962 members spread in 237 congregations (151 organized churches and 86 groups), which are organized in 30 districts. The average of Adventists in this Conference is of 1 per 115 inhabitants³

In the South Austral Chile Conference territory, Adventist education is based on the premise “of a Christian education and in the commitment of guiding all educational activities of quality in the process of teaching-learning and the natural inclusion of faith and teaching.” While promoting “academic excellence and including essential subjects for the practice of a responsible citizenship. Its goal is to evenly develop the spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and vocational aspects in the lives of the students.”⁴ Thus, South Austral Chile Conference serves about 4,813 kids and teenagers in 10 institutions offering Primary, Elementary, and Secondary Education.

The schools that are part of the Julián Ocampo Educational Foundation are: Angol Adventist Academy, located at 2682 Úrsula Suárez in the city of Angol, Malleco province, Araucanía region, with 490 students; Trovolhue Adventist School, located at 161 Los Tilos St., Trovolhue Alto, in the city of Trovolhue, Cautín province, Araucanía, with 159 students; Temuco Adventist Academy, which has two units--one at 251 Portales St., offering Elementary Education (Kínder – 5th), and the other at 0280 Los Creadores Ave, offering Elementary and High School Education (6th – 4th High school), both institutions are in the city of Temuco, Araucanía and together have 959 students; Villarica Adventist Academy, located at 775 Pedro Montt, city center, in the city of Villarrica, Araucanía, with 459 students; Pitrufrquén Adventist Academy, located at 959 Barros Arana, Pitrufrquén, Araucanía, with 530 students; Osorno Adventist School, located at 1697 Francisco Bilbao, Osorno, Los Lagos region, with 338 students; Puerto Montt Adventist School, located at 1991 Las Margaritas, Mirasol, in the city of Puerto Montt, Los Lagos, with 413 students; “Bambi” de Castro Kindergarten, located at 394 Fernando Márquez de La Plata, Castro, also in Los Lagos, with 54 kids; Valdivia Adventist Academy, located at 2565 Errazuriz St., Valdivia, Los

Ríos region, with 962 students; and Punta Arenas Adventist Academy, located at 229 José González in the city of Punta Arenas, Magallanes region, with 449 students.⁵

Committed to spreading the Gospel, South Austral Chile Conference has 18 radio stations⁶ and also the transmission of the TV Nuevo Tiempo [Hope Channel] through open or paid channels.⁷ These media spread the message of harmony, peace, and hope, announcing the soon return of Jesus.

Regarding the number of staff members, there are a total of 505 people doing the work in this mission field. Of these, 21 have missionary credentials and four are licensed missionaries who serve in the areas of education and administration, among others. For the ministry, the Conference has 11 licensed pastors and 29 credentialed ones.⁸

The Origin of the SDA Work in the Conference Territory

It was in southern Chile that the first Adventist family settled in the country. In 1885, Claude and Antoinette Dessignet arrived in the Traiguén area, Malleco province, Araucanía region, shortly after their conversion in France through Daniel T. Bordeau's work. Their silent testimony resulted in the conversion of Pedro and Rosalía Maitre. However, there wasn't a main church establishment yet. In 1894, canvasser⁹ Clair Nowlen came to the Chilean territory through the southern end to work in the city of Punta Arenas (Chilean Patagonia) and later in the city of Valparaíso, located on the Pacific coast in the center of Chile.¹⁰

The work establishment in Chile is strongly linked to Thomas H. Davis and Frederick W. Bishop's arrival in Valparaíso in December 1894. There, they met with Nowlen and soon learned of the Sabbath observers in the south of the country. Davis decided to go visit the Dessignet family in the south and stayed there, working in the area for a few months. Nowlen, on the other hand, returned to Punta Arenas, where he worked for a little longer before returning to Argentina and later to Europe.¹¹

In 1895, the first Adventist minister to arrive in the area, Granville H. Baber, came to Chile. Upon his arrival, in addition to Nowlen, Davis, and Bishop, Baber reported that a Swiss canvasser named Segesser was working in the city of Puerto Montt in southern Chile facing heavy opposition.¹² In the first months of 1896, Davis was in Victoria, where he distributed material with the Adventist message for a short time before moving to Santiago near Bishop to begin the work there in mid-1896.

Davis and Bishop's work in Santiago had great repercussions for the progress of the work in southern Chile. In late 1896, a young dentist student named Ruperto Albornoz, from the city of Angol, heard that there were Sabbath keepers in Santiago and went to look for them. After studying and accepting the message, he returned to spread the good news in Angol. Davis and Bishop went to that area and reported 14 Sabbath keepers in Angol – five in the city of Mulchén and in other parts of the South.¹³ Among those found in Angol, Jara and a young woman named Susana – who in 1901 became Davis' wife – stood out. A convert from Mulchén, José Luis

Escobar, became one of the pioneers in South American Adventism along with others in taking the message to Lima, Perú, in 1898.¹⁴

Also in 1896, Eduardo W. Thomann – a Swiss new convert to Adventism in Santiago, under the influence of Bishop and Davis – traveled South to share his new faith. He especially wanted to visit Carlos Krieghoff, an old friend from his youth who was a member of the Presbyterian Church he had already evangelized. Krieghoff embraced the Adventist message and later became an important church leader.¹⁵

In the beginning of 1897, Pastor Baber did his first tour towards the South, accompanied by Enrique Balada, another new convert from Santiago. Evangelistic meetings were carried out in Angol and Mulchén, resulting in the baptism of 16 people. In the end of that same year, Baber and Balada returned to the South, this time visiting places like Victoria, Púa, Temuco, and Nueva Imperial. In Victoria, Baber baptized Krieghoff – who was left in charge of the congregation in Victoria and of the first advances of the work in the towns of Chanco and Galvarino. In Nueva Imperial, one of the first converts was an Irishman named Thomas Morris.

In 1898, the first Chile Mission (presently Chile Union Mission) congress was celebrated in the city of Victoria, Malleco province. Then, evangelistic meetings were carried out in Chanco, Temuco, Nueva Imperial, and Lautaro. In 1901, in the second issue of *Revista Adventista* published in Valparaíso, reports from the existing groups in Chile were given, which accounted for the already existing Adventist groups in the southern area of Victoria, Chanco, Púa, Perquenco, Nueva Imperial, and Valdivia.

In 1904, upon his arrival to Chile as the new Chile Mission president, Francisco H. Westphal conducted evangelistic meetings in Chanco, Galvarino, and Temuco with Krieghoff's support. For a while, Westphal lived in the city of Pitrufquén in the Cautín province in the Araucanía region, where an Adventist group was already established. In 1907, a new organized congregation in Pitrufquén was reported.¹⁶ In 1911, there were organized churches in Loncoche and Temuco. There aren't many records of churches built during those initial periods, but in 1916, it is expected that there were chapels in Púa and Pitrufquén ready to be dedicated.¹⁷

During this time, the first educational work initiatives in the South emerged. In 1905, Filadelfia School started operating near Baja Imperial (Puerto Saavedra), under the direction of Víctor Thomann, with the goal of working for the Mapuche people¹⁸ in the area. The Church's statistical records say that this school was active for only a couple of years. In 1906, a school was established in Púa in a rural property donated by Krieghoff. The purpose of this project was to turn this institution into the missionary Academy of Chile. Classes started in April of that same year, and the activities continued until the beginning of the following decade. At the end of the year, the School moved to a rural town near the city of Chillán. Púa Training School – later Chile Adventist University Academy – is currently one of the oldest educational institutions in the country.

Until the first half of the 20th century, the Adventist educational work in this part of Chile (Araucanía region, South) was the most active and largest in the country. Its influence was important for the church growth in the region. In the issue of the *Revista Adventista* issued in December 1907, a West Coast Mission report registered

16 active Sabbath Schools in the mission, with nine in the southern region of Chile: Bajo Imperial (Puerto Saavedra), Chanco, Carahue, Galvarino, Pitrufquén, Púa, Púa Arriba, Perquenco, and Nueva Imperial.¹⁹ Meanwhile, J. W. Westphal, in the same year, during one of his visits to the city of Punta Arenas, reported that he believed there were very few Sabbath keepers in that city.²⁰ This happened because the region didn't receive any Adventist influence for years following Nowlen's work there in 1894 and 1895.

However, in Cautín province, after the Púa Training School was established, a new school in Pitrufquén opened in 1908.²¹ This institution became known for a while as the Pitrufquén Adventist Institute because of the educational programs it offered. While the educational work progressed, the publications work also stood firm as a means of conveying the Adventist message. Thus, in 1909, some canvassers are mentioned as working in the area. Cristóbal Mella covered Gorbea, Loncoche, and Pitrufquén; the Olvarría and Paredes brothers working in Valdivia, Unión, Osorno, and Puerto Montt; and Bishop in the far South.

In February 1914, the former South American Union Conference (presently Argentina Union Conference) created a field for assisting the most Austral area of Chile and Argentina, headquartered in Punta Arenas with Arthur G. Nelson assigned as the missionary in charge. It covered the Argentine territories of Chubut, Santa Cruz, and Tierra del Fuego and Magallanes in the Chilean side, in addition to the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas). In 1917, this missionary field received the name of Magallanes Mission.²²

Then, as fruit of this work both in the publications and health areas, a group of believers was formed in that city and its surrounding areas. Nevertheless, when Pastor Frank Westphal visited there in 1918, the number in the group had declined, but with much effort, they managed to reorganize the group with a good number of baptisms.²³ In 1920, Juan Wedekamper was in charge, and in 1925, C. A. Anderson was leading. The last managers were W. F. Miller (1929-1937) and J. D. Replogle (1937-1943). As a result and influence of the joint work of missionaries such as Nelson, Westphal, and others, years later, in 1926 Brother Ernest Kuntzmann and his wife decided to live in the city of Valdivia to work among the German residents in southern Chile.

In 1928, a small school started operating in the emerging city of Temuco. This school, when organized, operated on the premises of the home of Pastor Abraham Berchin.²⁴ Other records indicate that, in 1933, there were at least five schools in the Araucanía region: Pitrufquén, Trovolhue, Imperial (Carahue), Cullinco, and Rucapangue.²⁵ In 1936, of the 13 active schools in the country, nine were located in the southern part of Chile.²⁶ This indicates that the Adventist educational system was gaining strength and becoming relevant over time.

In 1950, when the South Chile Conference (ASCh) was created, the territories that today are covered by the Central South Chile Conference (ACSch) and the South Austral Chile Conference reported 22 churches, 2,458 members, eight ordained ministers, and 137 baptisms throughout the year.²⁷ In addition, around the same time, the Gospel arrived in the Chiloé archipelago region when a canvasser discovered some people interested there. Consequently, in 1958, Mariano Renedo led a series of evangelistic meetings on the island, and in 1962, Pastor Andrés Gutiérrez was assigned to the region.²⁸ However, the Church encountered some setbacks that hampered

its growth.

One of these difficulties happened in 1960, when the greatest earthquake ever registered struck the Chilean city of Valdivia, with a 9.5 on the Richter magnitude scale – which goes from 1 to 10. The earthquake was so strong that it not only shook 900 km of the Chilean coast, but also Japan, New Zealand, Hawaii, and California:²⁹ Juan Riffel – from the South American Division Public Relations Department – reported that, initially, more than 10,000 people had died. Due to this event, the Adventist Church in South America gathered resources to assist the needs of the Chilean victims.³⁰

However, in the midst of a great tragedy, the hand of God acted to minimize the damage in this region. In addition to the help received, God preserved the Adventist temple in Valdivia, and since it remained intact, it became a refuge for 104 people at that time. Similarly, there was the case of an elderly sister who managed to hold on to a tree trunk after being warned by a man who had also been alerted about what had happened in his village. While the water was rising, the sister was singing and praying until salvation came to this faithful woman, who was able to escape death. That is why it is said that even amid chaos, the Hand of God could be seen. Even in such circumstances, the Church continued to employ its efforts in preaching the Gospel!³¹

In the last months of 1978, the South American Division welcomed King's Heralds quartet to its territory, which along with Pastor Milton Peverini – speaker-director of the *La Voz de la Esperanza* [*The Voice of Hope*] program – carried out important evangelistic campaigns. In Chile, the first city to receive them was Temuco. “There they had more radio interviews and visits with authorities, including the governor...” Then, they got to present an hour-and-a-half long program for an audience of about 4,000 people, and it was also aired by four local radio stations. The same team also carried out a program in Punta Arenas – which, at the time, had only 250 Adventists. Without a doubt, this was an important evangelizing event in that region of Chile.³²

Mission Organizational History

The direct antecedent of South Austral Chile Conference was the Austral Chile Mission (MACh). The new mission was created from the division of the South Chile Conference (ASCh), which had remained unaltered for 50 years since its inception in 1950. The division was approved by the end of 2000.³³ By then, just before its division into two fields, ASCh had 165 organized churches, 100 groups, 38,884 members, 34 ordained ministers, and 2,141 people being baptized throughout the year. The new Austral Chile Mission (MACh) was created, and Ricardo A. González was appointed as its president and secretary while Juan A. Fernández was made treasurer.³⁴ This new institution started assisting 35 churches, 23 groups, and 6,576 members in nine pastoral districts.³⁵ Its missionary territory covered from the X Region of Los Lagos until the XII Region of Magallanes, and it was headquartered in the city of Osorno at 2040 Alcalde René Soriano Bórquez Ave., Los Lagos region.³⁶ As a matter of fact, this Mission was partially implemented in 2001, but became effective after the ASCh Congress held in Chillán in January 2002.

After eight years, MACH had 48 churches, 40 groups, and 8,544 members assisted by 14 ordained ministers, with 580 people being baptized that year.³⁷ Thus, in order to better serve the congregations, in April 2010, Chile Union Mission requested that the South American Division make a territorial restructuring of ASCh and MACH. So, the districts from the IX Region of Araucanía, which belonged to ASCh, were transferred to MACH. Among other requests that were granted was the relocation of the Mission headquarters from the city of Osorno to Temuco, the MACH change of name to South Austral Chile Mission (MSACH), and the projection of a change of status from Mission to Conference by the end of 2011. In January 2011, MSACH began operating in the city of Temuco with Luis Araya as president, Josué Espinoza as secretary, and Guillermo Acosta as treasurer.³⁸

Due to the February 27, 2010, earthquake, the former ASCh headquarters in Temuco – located at Claro Solar 1170 St. – was affected, so the new Mission operated in Temuco Adventist Academy offices located at Los Creadores 0280 Ave. Finally, in December 2011, South Austral Chile Mission's change of status was approved, and it was renamed the South Austral Chile Conference beginning January 1, 2012.³⁹ The administration of the former Mission, which was then formed by Luis Araya as president, Josué Espinoza as secretary, and Ricardo Melo as treasurer of the emerging Conference, was ratified. The construction of a new headquarters building on Claro Solar St. was carried out from 2013 to 2016, and it included more modern and adequate facilities to better serve the needs of the field.

South Austral Chile Conference's mission is the same one that has guided through all other Adventist institutions: "show God's love to all, preaching's the Gospel of Christ to every tribe, language, and nation. We want all to know the hope of Christ's return as Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer of our lives."⁴⁰ With this mission in mind, many projects and events have been carried out with satisfying results.

From December 5 to 8, 2014, the first South Austral Chile Conference Camporee⁴¹ of Pathfinders⁴² took place. The event was entitled "El Reino que Viene" [The Kingdom to Come] and gathered about 700 participants in the Wenulén Country Club, which is located in the city of Puerto Montt. In addition to the many activities carried out there (marches, events of skill and physical activity, as well as the long-awaited rally known as "Super Conqui"), there was a strong evangelistic and commitment sense that led those present to make a stand to be ready for the Kingdom to come. At the end of the event, 23 people were baptized.⁴³ Currently, there are 66 clubs and 1,862 Pathfinders in South Austral Chile Conference.⁴⁴

One of South Austral Chile Conference projects that supports and encourages involvement is the "Impacto Esperanza" [Hope Impact] project. This program includes promoting an annual mass distribution of books by members of local Adventist churches, and they are encouraged to conduct a house-to-house distribution in their neighborhoods and in other areas of their cities. The book distribution usually takes place along with conducting of a health fair and other missionary activities. This project has been active for more than 10 years all over the South American Division.⁴⁵

Every year, thousands of books are distributed in the South Austral Chile Conference territory. For example, on Sunday June 21, 2015, 3,000 units of the book “Viva con Esperanza” [Live with Hope] and “La Única Esperanza” [The Only Hope] were handed out. On that occasion, members of the Adventist Churches in Temuco took advantage of a Copa América match that was held in a stadium in that city and used the opportunity to impact the thousands of fans and workers who were on the streets nearby.⁴⁶ And by the end of May 2018, more than 40,000 issues had been handed out.⁴⁷

Through these and other similar activities, South Austral Chile Conference has found success in fulfilling its mission. It’s been 18 years since South Austral Chile Conference started spreading the Advent message to everyone in its territorial area. In this Conference, pastors, leaders, and members work together in their districts and congregations throughout the year, ready to face future challenges, safe in God’s hands and united in preaching the Gospel.

Chronology of Administrative Leaders ⁴⁸

Presidents: Ricardo González (2002); Raúl Larrondo (2003-2008); Francisco Briceño (2009); Luis Araya (2010-2015); Aldo Muñoz Perrin (2015-2018); Israel Jaramillo (2018-2019); Juan Zúñiga (2020-Present).

Secretaries: Ricardo González (2002); Raúl Larrondo (2003); Patricio González (2004-2007); Daphe Cuellar (2008); Juan Lara (2009); Josué Espinoza (2010-2011); Josué Espinoza (2012-2013); Leonardo Gajardo (2014-2019); Alberto Silva (2019-Present).

Treasurers: Juan A. Fernández (2002); Raúl Pérez (2003); Patricio González (2004-2007); Daphe Cuellar (2008); Daniel Castro (2009); Guillermo Acosta (2010-2011); Ricardo Melo (2012-2013); Claudio Pardo (2014-2019); Alexis Medina (2019-Present).⁴⁹

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NOTES

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2. Ibid.
3. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Statistics*, South Austral Chile Conference (2013-Present), accessed April 1, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2UBwEf4>.
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16. See *Revista Adventista* 7, no. 7, July 1907, 5.
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18. The Mapuche people "are considered direct descendants of the pre-Hispanic archaeological cultures Pitrén (100 - 1100 AD) and El Vergel (1100 - 1450 AD), that developed in the region, between the Bío Bío river and the Reloncaví bosom. [...] Today, the Mapuches reach more than 600,000 people, corresponding to 87.3% of the country's indigenous population". "*Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino*" [Chilean Pre-Columbian Art Museum], "Pueblos Originarios > Mapuche" [Native Peoples> Mapuche], accessed April 2, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2X4B4wr>.
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39. Executive Board of the Chilean Union, February 11, 2010, agreement no. 2010-377, which records the SAD vote no. 2010-55.
40. South Austral Chile Conference, "Misión" [Mission], Facebook page, accessed March 10, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2xveQsR>.
41. "Camporee is a great camp that gathers young people to take part in one of the pathfinder clubs, led by the Seventh-day Adventist Church all over the world." *Seventh-day Adventist Church Website*, "Camporí de Conquistadores de la DSA" [SAD Pathfinders Camporee], accessed April 1, 2020, <https://bit.ly/39GlpFm>.
42. The Pathfinders Club is composed of "boys and girls that vary from 10 to 15 years, and there's no partiality on people's social status, color or religion. They gather once per week with the intent of developing talents, abilities, insights, and taste for nature." These teenagers are known "for getting thrilled with outdoor activities such as camping, trekking, hiking, exploring forests and caves". [...] Not to mention that "their knowledge on outdoor survival in places that are hard to live, they know how to cook outside, lit fires without matches, and other things." Apart from that, "their skills are shown as a close order discipline, they develop a broad creativeness for arts and crafts, and fight against the

use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs." *Seventh-day Adventist Church Website*, "¿Quiénes son los Conquistadores?" [Who are the Pathfinders?], accessed February 20, 2020, <http://bit.ly/2TpEBBY>.

43. Kenny Rivas, "Celebran 23 bautismos en I Cámpori de Conquistadores ASACH" [They celebrate 23 baptisms in the I ASACH Pathfinders Camporee], *Noticias Adventistas* [Adventist News], December 18, 2014, accessed on March 09, <https://bit.ly/2Q0hrBq>.
44. *ASACH Ministry of Pathfinders and Adventurers*, "Estadísticas - Asociación Sur Austral de Chile" [Statistics - South Austral Chile Conference], accessed March 9, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2xpccFs>.
45. *Seventh-day Adventist Church Website*, "Impacto Esperanza" [Hope Impact], accessed March 10, 2020, <http://www.adventistas.org/impacto10anos/es/>.
46. Kenny Rivas, "Copa América impactada por jóvenes adventistas" [America Cup impacted by Adventist youth], *Noticias Adventistas* [Adventist News], June 26, 2015, accessed March 9, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2W2bvLZ>.
47. ASACH Communication Department, "Así se vivió el Impacto Esperanza en la región sur austral de Chile" [This is how the Hope Impact was experienced in the South Austral region of Chile], *Noticias Adventistas* [Adventist News], May 29, 2018, accessed March 10, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2vlvsNI>.
48. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, South Austral Chile Conference, accessed on April 01, 2020, <https://bit.ly/39AJM8r>; "Austral Chile Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Hagerstown, MD.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2003), 253; South Austral Chile Conference, *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2018): 236. More information about all presidents, secretaries, and treasurers in the history of ASACH is available in the *SDA Yearbooks* from 2003 to 2019.
49. More information about the South Austral Chile Conference can be found in their website at <http://asach.adventistas.org/> or in social media at Facebook: [@asuraustral](#), Instagram: [@asuraustral](#), Twitter: [@asuraustral](#), and YouTube: [Asociación Sur Austral de Chile](#).

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