



Central Venezuela Conference

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Central Venezuela Conference

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Central Venezuela Conference is a part of East Venezuela Union Mission. Central Venezuela Conference's territory includes Municipio Libertador of the city of Caracas, Vargas, and part of Municipio Tovar of the state of Aragua.

Central Venezuela Conference is a part of East Venezuela Union Mission. Its headquarters are located in Caracas, the capital city of the Bolivian Republic of Venezuela and the nation's main administrative, financial, political, commercial, and cultural center. Caracas is located in the north-central coastal zone of the country 15 kilometers from the Caribbean Ocean, and it is at an altitude of 900 meters over sea level in a valley over the

mountains. Waraira Repano National Park, or El Ávila National Park, is known as *el pulmón de la ciudad* (“the lungs of the city”) since it separates Caracas City from the central zone, which can be accessed through the Caracas highway, La Guaira. The highway leads to the state of Vargas, the main international airport, and the second port of the country on the coast of the Caribbean Ocean.¹

Central Venezuela Conference’s territory includes Municipio Libertador of the city of Caracas, Vargas, and part of Municipio Tovar of the state of Aragua. The territory also houses the following national political institutions: Miraflores Palace, executive headquarters, Federal Capitol, headquarters of the National Assembly, Supreme Court of Justice, National Electoral Council, Public Ministry, General Controller of the Republic, and Public Defense.

The territory is approximately 2,000 square kilometers, and its population is approximately 3,400,000² In 2019, Central Venezuela Conference had 61 organized churches, 34 groups, 22,676 members, seven ordained pastors, 11 licensed ministers, and 113 active members.³ Its offices are located at Calle 1, Montalban 1, Caracas 1020, Distrito Capital, Venezuela.

Central Venezuela Conference Institutions

Unidad Educativa Colegio Adventista “Ricardo Greenidge” is located at Avenida Principal del Paraíso N°17, Parroquia El Paraíso, Capital District, Caracas, Venezuela.⁴ Missionary Luis Greenidge founded it in 1936, and it was moved to its current location in 1956.⁵ The school offers elementary education (1st to 6th grade), secondary education (1st to 5th year of science), and a day care facility. The curriculum follows the Venezuela Educational Legislation and Seventh-day Adventist education philosophy.⁶

Unidad Educativa Adventista de Carapita was founded in 1978 by Domingo Figueredo.⁷ It is located in Barrio El Manguito, Calle Real S/N next to Carapita Adventist Church, Antímano, Capital District.⁸ This educational institution’s mission is to help students grow physically, mentally, and spiritually – “Educating for Eternity.” As of June 2019, it is an elementary and secondary school with 310 registered students.⁹

Súper Bueno Vegetarian Restaurant is located at Capitolio de Conde y Padre Sierra, Edificio Bapgel, half a block from the National Assembly of the Capital District.¹⁰ It offers vegetarian meals at fair prices. Throughout the years, it has served the community in the center of the city.

Unidad Adventista de Orientación y Terapias para el Desarrollo is located at Avenida Principal del Paraíso No 17, Parish El Paraíso Capital District, Caracas, Venezuela. It offers the following specialized therapeutic services: occupational medicine, speech therapy, behavioral therapy, occupational health, early intervention, personal development, medicine and work-related health, psychopedagogy, physiotherapy, and nutrition.¹¹

Centro Clínico Adventista is located on Calle Sur 4, Dolores a Puente Soublette, Edificio Dispensario Adventista, Quinta Crespo, Caracas, Venezuela.¹² This institution opened on October 12, 1940, as *Dispensario Adventista de*

Caracas.¹³ Its name was changed in 2011. It offers the following specialized services: general medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, cardiology, gastroenterology, dermatology, ophthalmology, urology, traumatology, otolaryngology, nephrology, general surgery, plastic surgery, radiology, and abdominal and transvaginal ultrasounds. It also offers services in the following: odontology, a clinical laboratory, and a recently renovated surgery unit.¹⁴

Nutriven is located in Avenida Principal del Paraíso N°17, Parroquia El Paraíso of the Capital District, Caracas, Venezuela. It was created in 2011 with the main objective of offering healthy natural products to the public.¹⁵ The institution's purpose is to help create a healthy lifestyle through healthy products.

Hiperbueno was inaugurated on July 17, 2014, and is located in the offices of Central Venezuela Conference. Its main objective is to offer materials to local churches to improve children and adolescent ministries, women ministry, youth ministry, personal ministries, evangelism, and other areas.¹⁶

Agencia de Publicaciones was located on the corner of Bucare and Puente Junin, Edificio Bucarey, Lower Level, Space 2, before moving to its current location in the offices of Central Venezuela Conference. As of 2019, the agency is administered by the Inter-American Division Publishing Agency, offering materials for churches and books for the public.

Beginnings of Adventist Church Work in Central Venezuela Conference Territory

On August 1, 1910, the first Adventist missionaries, Pastor Frank Lewis Lane, his wife, Rose, Richard E. Greenidge, and his wife, Rebeca, arrived in La Guaira Port.¹⁷ From there, they traveled approximately 36 kilometers by train to reach Caracas and settle permanently in Venezuela.¹⁸

From December 1910 to March 1911, these missionaries gave Bible studies to a group of people interested in the biblical truth. On March 25, 1911, they baptized Miguel Corro, María de Jesús Morales de Madriz, Cristina Aponte, Carmen de Corro, Manuela de Castillo, Ramón Castillo, Braulio Vegas, Anselma de Vegas, Crisanta de González, Josefina González, and María Luisa Urrutia, conducting the first baptism in the country. These 11 people were baptized in Anauco River, Coticita del Cerro Sector, on Avila Hill.¹⁹ The first Adventist church in Venezuela was organized on March 26, 1911, with 16 members.²⁰

Formative Events: Organization of Central Venezuela Conference

In the beginning, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Venezuela was administered by the General Conference. From 1911-1919, it was part of South Caribbean Conference. In 1919, Venezuela Mission was organized.²¹ In 1922, the Inter-American Division started administering Venezuela Mission. Caribbean Union Mission was later organized, and Venezuela was a part of it until 1927. That year, Colombo-Venezuelan Union Mission was

organized with three territories: Venezuela Mission, Atlantic Colombia Mission, and Central Colombia Mission.²²

In 1950, Venezuela Mission was divided in two missions, East Mission located in Caracas and West Mission located in Barquisimeto. On January 6, 1989, East Mission was organized and located in Maturin. That same year, Antillean Venezuela Union Mission was established with four fields: Central Venezuela Conference, Dutch Antilles Conference, West Mission, and East Mission.²³ By the grace of God, the church in Venezuela continued growing. On April 7, 2010, West Venezuela Union Conference and East Venezuela Union Conference were organized.²⁴

From its beginning, Central Venezuela Conference was a pioneer in implementing strategic programs to reach different territories of the city, including the middle class population. The need to reach these groups led to the start of another conference to administer to the east zone and adjacent communities – Central East Venezuela Conference. A lot of history surrounds this conference, from the arrival of the gospel and construction of the first churches to the important institutions that currently represent the legacy and values of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Central Venezuela Conference has been trying to fulfill the mission of the church through its Mission Statement: Glorify God, and, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, guide each believer to a personal and renovating experience with Christ that will enable him or her as a disciple to share evangelism with all people²⁵ The following are some of the main goals of the conference:

To establish 20 percent of church members as leaders of small groups

To involve 60 percent of the brethren in areas of missionary work

To prepare a minimum of five lay evangelists per district

To prepare a minimum of 25 percent of active church members as Bible instructors

To involve a minimum of 60 percent of active church members in becoming witnesses for the different church ministries

To have 60 percent of church members and those of small groups participate as missionary couples

To organize a new church in the district

To organize a new small group in the district

Recent Successes of Central Venezuela Conference

On August 8, 2010, in the *Poliedro de Caracas* (an indoor sports arena), the 100th anniversary of the church in Venezuela was celebrated with 13,000 people attending. General Conference President Ted N. C. Wilson challenged the conference's members to go forward and "increase the work of God in a dynamic way." This was a big push to create a major growth strategy in the union and Central Venezuela Conference.²⁶

Another historic moment in Caracas happened on April 16, 2016. In the *Estadio Universitario de Caracas*, with over 23,000 people present, the evangelistic quinquennial initiative "Lord Transform Me" was launched. Its purpose was to motivate the 3,800,000 members of the Inter-American Division to attain a daily transformation in Christ, participate in church activities, and commit themselves to share the love of Christ in their communities. In 800 small groups in Caracas, evangelism efforts were achieved. Local and international evangelists in the Inter-American Division's territory gave 200 evangelism campaigns.²⁷ The conference witnessed 4,012 disciples being baptized during the evangelism initiative. Thanks to the Global Mission pioneers that helped establish new congregations in the city, 100 new churches were established. The event became the first of its type organized by the church in Caracas as well as the largest evangelism effort in the 106 years of the Adventist Church in the country.²⁸

Challenges Faced by Central Venezuela Conference

Venezuela is currently experiencing a sociological phenomenon that has impacted the function of the conference's churches: the exodus of a great number of Venezuelans as a product of the complex reality of the country. This situation has forced many congregation leaders to flee the country, removing human resources in a short amount of time without proper substitutes.²⁹

Central Venezuela Conference needs a plan to create new leaders of all ages and new members to cover different areas of work. It also needs a master plan to develop the field, paying attention and care to churches, establishing a systematic missionary presence, and renewing focus on discipleship following the method of Christ.³⁰

List of Presidents

Norberto Carmona (1989-1992); Edgar Brito (1992-1995); Héctor Sánchez (1995-2000); Jorge Barboza (2000-2003); Donaldo Enrique Valbuena (2003-2007); Marcos Salas (2007-2011); Vladimir Kabbas (2011-2017); Luis Carrasco (2017-).

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