

# Campeche Mission

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## DAVID MANUEL PACHECO

David Manuel Pacheco Cocom, D.Min. (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan), is the executive secretary of Campeche Mission. For 36 years, he has served as a pastor and has had departmental and administrative responsibilities in various conferences of Southeast Mexican Union Mission. He is married to Francisca de Paula Pacheco Aguilar and has two children.

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Campeche Mission's territory covers the State of Campeche with a population of 899,931 in 11 municipalities.<sup>1</sup> It is part of Southeast Mexican Union Mission, which includes in its territory the states of Yucatan, Quintana Roo, and Tabasco. In July 2018, the mission had 9,349 baptized members, 82 organized churches, 100 groups, seven ordained ministers, and 15 licensed ministers.<sup>2</sup> It also had two campuses, 122 teachers, 12 full-time and 10 part-time colporteurs, and an associate director of the department of publications, who is supported by three regional AFIPROS (*Asociación Filantrópica de Profesionales de la Salud*, or "Philanthropic Association of Health Professionals") locations, who are supported through the mission's department of health.

## Origins of Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Campeche Mission Territory

The Adventist message arrived in different cities of the State of Campeche almost simultaneously. The cities of San Francisco de Campeche, Champotón, and Carmen received the message through the work of faithful colporteurs who distributed literature full of the knowledge and truth of God, unaware of the great harvest to gather from the seeds they planted.

## Early Work in San Francisco de Campeche

The state of Campeche received the Adventist message in 1906. Colporteurs such as Harzman and others "made possible the spread of Adventist literature throughout the Republic...their publications reaching the Yucatan, Tabasco, Campeche, and Veracruz through the magazines, 'The Messenger of Truth' and 'Health.'"<sup>3</sup>

In January 1912, H. F. Brown and his associate, J. A. P. Green, arrived in San Francisco de Campeche to work as literature evangelists, selling copies of "Patriarchs and Prophets." Mr. Brown wrote of how, upon arriving in Campeche, they met a shoemaker who let them use his workshop as a base from which to sell books. The shoemaker had studied the Bible on his own and read about the Sabbath earlier. He noticed that the colporteurs did not work on Saturday and asked if they respected the Biblical day of rest, which they answered affirmatively. After Bible studies, the shoemaker was converted into a faithful Sabbath keeper.<sup>4</sup>

Just before 1933, Anastasio Núñez Quiñones was converted, joined the small group of Adventist believers in Campeche, and became a missionary colporteur. In this work, he was supported by Arturo Vargas, a Nicaraguan pharmacist, associate director of publication, and colporteur living in Veracruz.<sup>5</sup>

In 1940, a congregation met in the home of Marcelino Gómez on 99 10B Street. Various families also met there, among which were Demetrio Cupul, his wife, Crispina García, and their children; the families of Juan García, Miguel Queb Sarmiento, Máximino Sonda, and Nelly Ruz; and the family of Secundina Shell García, mother of José García Shell, another of the leaders in the Adventist movement in Campeche. This congregation was a part of Yucatan Mission.<sup>6</sup>

Four names stand out among the leaders of the church in Campeche during the 1950s and 1960s: David Núñez Olivares, Feliciano Novelo, Arnaldo Collí, and José García. Through their leadership, the church spread to the surrounding communities of San Francisco de Campeche: Imí, Chemblás, Seybaplaya, Lerma, and Tikinmul. From this, 16 organized churches, 19 congregations, and seven affiliated groups were created.

## Early Work in Champotón

The church work started in Champotón in 1934. The message arrived through the missionary colporteurs, Alfonzo Martínez and Miguel Lara Flores. Their first contact was with Manuel Marín, who was the sacristan of the local Catholic church. At first, he resisted the Adventist message, but he accepted the Bible and doctrinal pamphlet they left with him. He studied these and learned about the “day of rest” among other Adventist doctrines. When he asked his priest if what he was learning was right, the priest answered: “If you’ve found the truth, follow it!”

The first Adventist congregation met in Marín’s house at 1 27<sup>th</sup> Street in Distrito San Patricio, Champotón, Campeche. The congregation would move many times. Finally, in 1969, they permanently moved the church to 34<sup>th</sup> Street, Colonia Centro, C.P. 24400. The church was duly established in 1954.<sup>7</sup>

## Early Work in Carmen

The church work started in Isla de Tris, Carmen, in June 1950, when Francisco Centeno Gil, his family, and his son-in-law, José Angel Farfán González, moved to the island. They had had two dreams in which God instructed them to return to Tris, which they had left due to better opportunities for work elsewhere. They had studied the Adventist message, had been baptized, and belonged to a small congregation in Matamoros, Escárcega, Campeche. Various pastors, such as E. Moon, Cleofas Valenzuela, Bolívar Ascencio, and Raúl M. Sánchez, saw to the congregation’s needs.

The congregation changed locations several times until Fidelia Martínez donated a plot of land on 107-A 3<sup>rd</sup> Street in front of Cuauhtémoc Park on August 15, 1963. The church was inaugurated on April 30, 1972, and

Pastor Velino Salazar Escarpulli directed the ceremony.

## Significant Events that Led to Organization of Campeche Mission

Before Campeche Mission was created, churches in its territory were a part of Mayab Conference. During Southeast Mexican Union Mission's mid-year plenary council during June 9-11, 2009, a vote was taken to create Campeche Mission.<sup>8</sup> Its administration would consist of Isaías Espinoza as president and Salomón Maya as treasurer.<sup>9</sup>

On February 1, 2010, Campeche Mission held its first constituency meeting in which 90 delegates met to approve the territorial division. Pastor Israel Leito, Inter-American Division president, was present, and Mayab Conference's territory was reorganized to create Campeche Mission.

## Campeche Mission Development

Campeche Mission was started with 14 districts: Campeche, Champotón, Carmen I, Carmen II, Escárcega, Ferrocarril, Candelaria, Carmelo, Calkiní, Lázaro Cárdenas, Sabancuy, Pablo García, Xpujil I, and Xpujil II. On February 15, 2010, the districts of Palizada, Bethel, and Carmen 3 were created.<sup>10</sup> On April 27, 2011, the districts of Xpujil I and Xpujil II were ceded to South Quintana Roo Mission.<sup>11</sup> Also in 2011, the districts of Brisas, Fertimex, and Carmen 4 were created.<sup>12</sup> In September 2012, the district of Hopelchen was created. In 2015, the district of Esmeralda was added, followed by the district of Nueva Candelaria in 2017. After adjustments were made to cede Palizada to East Tabasco and dissolve the districts of Hopelchen and Carmen 4, 18 districts remain today.<sup>13</sup>

## Future Plans for Campeche Mission Development

Between 2014-2018, Campeche Mission gained 5,632 members.<sup>14</sup> Until August 2018, it had a total membership of 11,056; with Southeast Mexican Union Mission's review of total memberships in January 2019, Campeche Mission had 9,095 members. With the 2019 baptisms, the current membership comes to a total of 9,349.

The current situation and plans for growth are as follows:

1. The main offices are centrally located in the territory, and the districts can be tended to with ease.
2. The territory is accessible for the workers. In most cases, workers tend to their churches and return to the main offices in the same day.
3. The means of communication are excellent.

4. The number of members per pastor is adequate. Each pastor cares for an average of 519 members.
5. The worker team is young and mature. The average age among the workers is 38 years.
6. The plans for development are promising due to current policies regarding petroleum and agriculture.
7. The membership is faithful. Their knowledge increasingly grows and matures.

The challenge is to finish preaching the Adventist message in this territory. There are four major municipalities with no well-established Adventist church; consequently, the Adventist message has not been able to effectively reach these communities. In Hecelchakán, Hopelchén, and Tenabo, the native language is Maya, which makes dialogue with the people difficult. In Palizada, the challenge is seen in the distances between the church and the city and in the rivers that must be crossed to reach these communities.

To promote overall growth, the administration makes every effort to: promote revival and reformation in the spiritual life of its workers and members, coordinate the work of the church departments behind one vision, involve all members with the fulfillment of the mission, raise awareness about holistic stewardship among the membership, and depend entirely on the source of our salvation: Jesus.

## List of Presidents

Tomás Isaías Espinoza Hernández (2010-2012); Orlando Alejandro Castillo Tamayo (2012-2015); Felipe Domínguez Pérez (2015- ).

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