



Pará-Amapá Mission headquarters in 2016.

Photo courtesy of Pará-Amapá Mission Archives.

Pará-Amapá Mission

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The Pará-Amapá Mission (Missão Pará-Amapá or MPA) is an administrative unit of the Seventh-day Adventist Church located in the territory of the North Brazil Union Mission (União Norte Brasileira or UNB).

The Pará-Amapá Mission is headquartered at 2015 Independência Ave. at Zip Code 67120-406 in the Quarenta Horas - Coqueiro neighborhood in the city of Ananindeua in the state of Pará, Brazil.

The MPA territory comprises the entire state of Amapá and the north part of the state of Pará. In Pará, the region attended by the Mission comprises 16 municipalities including the region of the Marajó Island. The churches on the right side of federal highway BR-316 from the Mosqueiro Road (Augusto Meira Filho Highway) in the city of Benevides all the way to Ave. Júlio César in Belém, state of Pará are also part of this field. The entire region assisted by MPA makes up a geographical area of 209,379,927 km².¹ The number of inhabitants in this territory is approximately 2,864,835 people of which 37,253 are Adventists who are distributed in 196 congregations. The average is of one Adventist per 77 inhabitants.² Until June 2019, MPA had 47 workers. Of these, 34 were credentialed ministers, nine had ministerial licenses, and four were with missionary credentials.³

The UNB headquarters, Amazon Adventist College (Faculdade Adventista da Amazônia or FAAMA) and Coqueirão Adventist Training and Recreation Center (Centro Adventista de Treinamento e Recreação Coqueirão or CATRE) are in the MPA mission field. Also, there are seven educational units of the Adventist Education Network in operation within the MPA territory. These units are: New City Adventist Academy (Colégio Adventista Cidade Nova) located in the city of Ananindeua, and it has 638 students and 53 teachers; Coqueiro Adventist School (Escola Adventista do Coqueiro) which is also in Ananindeua, and it has 781 students and 46 teachers; Breves Adventist School (Escola Adventista de Breves) in Breves with 372 students and 21 teachers; Icoaraci Adventist School (Escola Adventista de Icoaraci) with 300 students and 26 teachers; Marambaia Adventist School (Escola Adventista da Marambaia) with 315 students and 27 teachers; Correios Adventist Academy (Colégio Adventista de Correios) with 447 students and 52 teachers, the last four ones are located in Belém; and Macapá Adventist Academy (Colégio Adventista de Macapá) located in the city of Macapá in the state of Amapá with 558 students and 46 teachers. Together, these institutions have a total of 3,411 students and 271 teachers.⁴

The Origin of the Adventist Work in the Mission Territory

From 1943 to 1988, the state of Amapá, with 142,814,585 km² of territory, was considered a federal area that was divided into three municipalities: Amapá, Macapá, and Mazagão.⁵ After the establishment of the new Brazilian Constitution in 1988, the territory became an independent and autonomous state.⁶ In the early 1950s, the estimated population of Amapá was just over 37,000 people. Of these, 98 percent considered themselves Roman Catholics. It was in this scenario that an Adventist couple was willing to go and share the Advent message with as many people as possible.⁷ This couple was Brother Hermínio Costa and his wife Neusa, who had recently been baptized in Belém and decided to move to Macapá in 1952. Hermínio was a tailor, and the couple saw the move to Macapá as an opportunity not only for a job but also as a chance to share the Gospel of Jesus.⁸

In the capital of Amapá, the couple began their missionary action by distributing leaflets with Bible messages throughout the region that invited people to attend worship meetings at their house. As time went by, people interested in the Adventist message began to attend and, later, some decided to be baptized.⁹ To carry out the baptism ceremonies, Pastor Leo B. Halliwell went to Macapá in 1953 and baptized the first six Adventists in the territory of Amapá. In that same year, the first Adventist church of Macapá, the SDA Central Church, was established. Even with few workers working in the north of the country, that church was able to receive help from a missionary.¹⁰ In 1956, Pastor Osvaldo Pereyra and his wife, coming from Montevideo, were called to work in Macapá, and that it made possible to carry out new missionary actions of the Church in the North of Brazil.¹¹

As the work in this region was promising and the missionary activities were bearing fruit, one of the challenges of the Lower Amazonas Mission (Missão Baixo-Amazonas or MBA, presently the North Pará Conference (Associação Norte do Pará or ANPa) was being able to evangelize all its vast territory and still support the congregations that already existed. At the time, the MBA served this region. The church leaders in Amapá, who had the desire to expand the preaching of the Gospel, planned a series of conferences.¹² In 1958, Pastor Gustavo Storch, who at the time was retired and lived in São Paulo in the southeast of the country, decided to conduct this series of conferences. Knowing the challenges he would encounter, Storch joined with a local Bible worker and invited another person who worked in Belém. So, for this project, the pastor had the help of these workers, of the church members led by Pastor Osvaldo and of a teacher named Diná Araújo.¹³

On August 31, 1958, members of another denomination, encouraged by their religious leader, carried out a resistance movement against the work of these Adventist evangelists. They even burned some Adventist Bibles and books in front of the government building while the conferences were happening.¹⁴ However, even in the face of this opposition, the evangelist organizers remained firm in their missionary purpose. Two young men called Abelardo and Luís attended the evangelistic meetings and, as a result, they were expelled from their homes. Even with such challenges, these young men were among those who were baptized on November 8 of that same year, the date of the first harvest resulting from this evangelism. This baptism marked the Adventist Church's establishment in the state of Amapá. Despite the opposition, the Church sought to expand the spreading of the Advent message in the region, and the results of these efforts were manifested years later.¹⁵

The Adventist work continued to progress in Macapá and the surrounding region. There was already a church and a primary school and the social assistance work was being done by the "Luzeiro" (Lightbearer Medical Launch).¹⁶ The missionary work carried out by Adventists in the region received recognition from authorities and the population. In this context, in 1969, Macapá was chosen by the Temperance Department of the Lower Amazonas Mission to conduct the "How to Quit Smoking in Five Days" ["Como Deixar de Fumar em Cinco Dias] course. This course was held in the Cine Territorial Hall, which was kindly being provided by the director of the Territory Educational Division [Divisão de Educação do Território]. During the program, the hall was full of people from various segments of the local society, all interested in overcoming the habit of smoking as well as other benefits the course provided for the participants' health. The lectures were given by members of the

Belem Adventist Hospital [Hospital Adventista de Belém] medical staff, and the movies *One in Twenty Thousand* [*Um em Vinte Mil*] and *Time Pulls the Trigger* [*O Tempo Aperta o Gatilho*] were also shown. By the end of the course, more than 100 people had stopped smoking.¹⁷

In the following year (1970), Lower Amazonas Mission held two Christian Summer Schools for Children.¹⁸ One was conducted in the city of Macapá and another in Belém, the capital of Pará. In the same year, Luzeiro IV (Lightbearer Medical Launch) made a major assistance trip to the MBA mission field, assisting seven municipalities. This operation was carried out under the medical leadership of Paulo Lima, and the captain was Brother João P. de Moura.¹⁹ Until the end of April, 97 people had already been baptized in the Lower Amazonas Mission.²⁰ Continuing this evangelistic pace, from July 4 to 11, 1970, there was a program of Volunteer Missionaries Revival (Reavivamento de Missionários Voluntários or MV) in Macapá.²¹ During this event, it was proposed to the youth that they copy the books in the New Testament. Thus, on Sabbath afternoon, all these youth, with paper and pen, took advantage of the Sabbath hours to start copying. On Wednesday, the marathon had been completed, and a total of 270 chapters had been written. Thus, the youth in Macapá obtained a manuscript of the New Testament that became a symbol of the work done with the youth in that region.²²

After that program, a series of conferences were held by Bible worker Rubens Lessa. These conferences began on August 23 and lasted until October 11, 1970. While these evangelistic events were happening, the Mission took the initiative to take advantage of a land donated by the state government to build a school, a social center, and a church. Thus, the construction work started for the school that would also be used as a worship hall until the church could be built. As a result of the conference, on the first Sabbath after the construction, there were already many people determined to be part of the Adventist community.²³ And thus, the evangelistic efforts continued throughout the region during the 1970s.

In 1980, during its first meeting of the year, the MBA leadership recommended district pastors to open branches of Educational Home and Health Service (Serviço Educacional Lar e Saúde or SELS) in their churches. These centers would provide access to Church literature and products both for Adventists and non-Adventists. One of these centers was built in the capital of Amapá and was coordinated by Macapá Central Adventist Church. Public worship services always took place on Sundays and Wednesdays from 7 to 8 pm.²⁴ Between August 3 and 7, 1982, the evangelistic work in the field was supported by the group The Voice of Prophecy [“A Voz da Profecia”].²⁵ Macapá was among the visited cities. The programs from that group received press coverage and were presented during four live broadcast programs and two television programs. After that, the team went to the Convention Center where other presentations would be made.²⁶ With the development of the evangelistic work in the region, in 1986, the construction of Adventist temples began in the neighborhood of Santa Rita and Laguinho, both in the city of Macapá.²⁷

In February 1996, after more than a decade of missionary expansion, Lower Amazonas Mission had its status changed to the Lower Amazonas Conference (Associação Baixo Amazonas or ABA).²⁸ As a way of integrating the

Church and the youth of the new Conference, in the late 1990s, 25 Pathfinders Clubs²⁹ from the state of Amapá and Pará participated in a historic Camporee³⁰ in that region. The ABA pastors and leaders were responsible for carrying out religious and field activities during the event. The program received media coverage, including the fact that more than 700 members of the clubs participated in a march on the streets of the city of Macapá. In this Camporee, 31 Pathfinders were baptized.³¹

In the early 2000s, the Church was committed to participation in and evangelization through Small Groups.³² In 2001 100 people were baptized. In the following year (2002), there were already 92 Small Groups operating in Macapá. At the time, pastors carried out two public campaigns a year, preaching 30 nights in a row in each one.³³ Through these campaigns, more than 1,090 people became members of the Adventist Church in this region. Efforts were also made to consolidate the Brothers' faith. From June 19 to 25, 2004, the Lower Amazonas Conference held a series of meetings about stewardship in Macapá. A total of 13 pastors led the work, including district pastors, department leaders, and administrators. They held 26 weeks of prayer that focused on Christian stewardship. The final meeting took place in the Sacaca Museum, where more than 1,500 people participated and 14 were baptized, making up a total of 130 baptisms during the week.³⁴

With the work expanding, attention was also given to the need of training and qualification of leaders. In June 2006, a Council of Elders and Pastors of the Lower Amazonas Conference took place. During this program, seminars with different themes were presented, and there were testimonies and moments of worship. About 150 people received training during the event.³⁵ Another important program took place in February 2008 when ABA's "Integration 2008" ["Integração 2008"] project happened. The objective was to emphasize the missionary pillars, share testimonies, qualify, and motivate participants to preach the Gospel. The program took place in the auditorium of SESI (Serviço Social da Indústria [Social Services Industry]) and brought together almost 400 people.³⁶ With training events like these, church members and leaders were better prepared to fulfil the mission, and the results came to fruition in the following years.

The Mission's Organizational History

Until 2013, ABA's territory had already been reorganized twice to meet the needs of the growth in the work in the region. In the first reconfigurations, the South Pará Conference [Associação Sul do Pará] was established, and it was headquartered in the city of Marabá, as well as the West Pará Mission [Missão Oeste do Pará], which is headquartered in Santarém and was created at the second reconfiguration. However, even after these dismemberments, the field was still too large and the number of Adventists was very high, reaching up to 54,953 members who were distributed in 347 churches that were organized in 63 pastoral districts. There were several obstacles to the progress of the work including great geographic distances, financial difficulties, and the small number of workers. In this context, an even more peculiar challenge was to attend the ten districts of the state of Amapá that was 1,200 kilometers away from the field headquarters. There were also five districts located

among the islands of the North of Pará that could only be accessed by boat or plane, making it very difficult to get to and to assist.³⁷

In this scenario, the Conference's leadership presented, still in 2013, a field reorganization proposal. Some considerations mentioned in the proposal document were: the vast geographical extension of the Lower Amazonas Conference, which was 285,171.889 km², making it very difficult to assist the hundreds of congregations; the fact that less than half of the total number of municipalities were district headquarters; the difficulties in assisting and in necessary training for the growth of the work; the small number of ministers who could assist the high number of members; and the fact that a reconfiguration of Lower Amazonas Conference would enable the creation of a new field in the state of Amapá.³⁸

As a result, it happened. On November 15, 2015, the Pará-Amapá Mission [Missão Pará-Amapá or MPA) Installation and Organization Assembly took place.³⁹ On the occasion, pastors Moisés Batista de Souza, Francisco Carlos Bussons da Silva, and Paulo Roberto Gonçalves Coelho were elected to serve as president, secretary, and treasurer, respectively.⁴⁰ The MPA was the 80th Adventist Church administrative headquarters to be created in South America, and its stated mission is "to call everyone to be disciples of Jesus Christ, to proclaim the eternal Gospel in the context of the three angels' messages (Revelation 14: 6-12), and to prepare the world for the soon return of Christ." Its headquarters was established at its present address in the city of Ananindeua. Its territory of operation comprised the entire state of Amapá, the north part of the state of Pará, and the region of Marajó Island. At the time of its establishment, MPA assisted approximately 33,450 members who were distributed in 175 churches organized in 35 pastoral districts in addition to managing other seven educational institutions. The new headquarters was inaugurated on February 3, 2016.⁴¹

In that same year, on November 16, a missionary post was inaugurated in the city of Macapá that was 336 km (in a straight line) from the MPA headquarters in Ananindeua. This post was established to serve as a missionary support base for the new Mission and as a preparatory landmark for the establishment of the future Amapá Mission. As a result, the distances between these locations would be shortened to better support the churches, and so the development of programs and training through the recently created Pará-Amapá Mission would be more effective. In addition, the SELS (Educational Home and Health Service) bookstore was inaugurated next to the missionary post, and it began to support Adventist members and the Christian public in general through the sales of natural products, religious articles, CDs, DVDs, books, and reviews.⁴²

The year 2016 continued to be a year of missionary advances for the Pará-Amapá Mission. Soon a great evangelistic program was carried out, called ["Macapá Impact" ["Impacto Macapá"] aiming at Church growth in that city. In addition, the institution also promoted other projects developed by the UNB. An example is the program "Discipling New Generations – Footprints" ["Disciplinando Novas Gerações – Pegadas"] that seeks to encourage and empower church members to be able to disciple children and teenagers.⁴³ This improvement program continued and, on October 7, 2017, the ANPa and MPA brought together the leaders in their churches

in the city of Belém to receive more training.⁴⁴ With this project improvement, on May 5, 2019, the participants graduated as the first group of graduates of the project “Disciplining New Generations” [“Disciplinando Novas Gerações”].⁴⁵

Since then, other projects have been receiving attention in MPA territory, including “Life for Lives” [“Vida por Vidas”], a program that focuses on encouraging helping others through blood donation.⁴⁶ Strong mobilization has been made through the “Caleb Mission Project” [“Missão Calebe”] that encourages church youth to donate part of their vacation time to preach the Gospel in cities with little or no Adventist presence. Because MPA understands the importance of having the youth consolidated in the faith and engaged in missionary work, much attention has been given to disciplining children, teenagers, and young people through the Pathfinders and Adventurers Clubs.⁴⁷ Currently, the Mission has 242 Pathfinder Clubs with 5,006 participants and 117 Adventurer Clubs with 1,650 children.⁴⁸

For the participants of these two clubs to get involved in the mission of the Church, various activities have been developed both in churches and in camps. On November 17, 2017, the first Adventur⁴⁹ of Pará-Amapá Mission took place, with the theme “Heirs of Hope” [“Herdeiros de Esperança”]. This event took place at CATRE Coqueiro, and lasted for three days. It was a remarkable experience for everyone who participated and for its organizers. On this occasion, there were investiture, dramatizations, baptisms, and leisure moments.⁵⁰ Another remarkable program, this time with focus on youth involvement, was the MPA I Pathfinders Camporee with the theme “Our Inheritance” [“Nossa Herança”]. This camp happened from June 29 to July 3, 2018, and was attended by 2,350 Pathfinders who also gathered at CATRE in the city of Ananindeua.⁵¹

MPA also evangelizes through other missionary fronts where it has also been actively involved such as the “Hope Impact” [“Impacto Esperança”] project⁵² that has been promoted by the SAD. In 2017, around 250,000 copies of the book “Seeking Hope” [“Em Busca de Esperança”] were distributed in the Mission’s territory.⁵³ Two years later (2019), in another edition of the project, 300,000 units of the book “Hope for the Family” [“Esperança para a Família”] were distributed. This large number of books were delivered in the context of an integrated evangelism program that, besides involving leaders and members, has its continuation through the work carried out in 6,500 small groups, 20,000 missionary pairs, and 12,000 Bible classes. Thus, the Gospel has advanced in the field with excellent results.⁵⁴

The missionary themes emphasized each year have enabled interesting evangelistic support activities. In June 2019, for example, the theme of the year was “Hope for the Family” [“Esperança para a Família”], and an event for families was held at the various MPA churches. The program was developed through a week of prayer as part of the project “Family Revival” [“Reviver Família”] with the title “The Refuge” [“O Refúgio”]. This event focused on strengthening families in the community. In addition, each Adventist couple was encouraged to bring a non-Adventist couple to also participate in the program. On the last day, 2,400 people gathered for the final meeting that took place at the Ceta Ecotel, a hotel in the capital of Amapá. As a result, four couples were baptized,

consolidating their commitment to Christ.⁵⁵

These and other actions are examples of the efforts made in the MPA field to spread the Gospel. And to continue to advance in their missionary goals, the leadership and members recall the many lessons learned along the way. One of them is that no difficulty is an impediment to fulfill the Gospel mission. With that in mind, the advancement plans for the next four years include the goal of even greater involvement for members in the preaching of the Gospel. One way to achieve this purpose is to make it so each Sabbath School action unit also functions as a Small Group. To this end, the Mission's leadership intends to keep investing time as well as human and financial resources in this project. Another goal is to reduce operating expenses from 74 percent to 64 percent in the short term, which will provide greater availability of resources for projects execution. In addition, it is intended to reach 100 percent of working capital as recommended by the Superior Organization and thus, to have "more offering to use in the field development project" and to build "new chapels, which is essential for the planting of new churches in the territory."⁵⁶ With all the effort, the goal is to reach 40 pastoral districts by the end of the quadrennium.⁵⁷

The Adventists of the Pará-Amapá Mission know that reaching these goals will be a great challenge just as it was difficult to overcome some difficulties throughout its history. However, the way God has conducted His work so far drives them to trust Him in the challenges ahead. Since the arrival of the first Adventists in this region, a lot of faith, dedication, and effort has been used to advance the work and, as a result, many fruits have already been harvested. During these six decades of Adventism in the states of Pará and Amapá, the number of Adventist members and institutions has grown substantially. Seeking to continue this legacy, in the five years of MPA's existence, its members and leaders have sought to fulfill the mission with the same motivation and commitment which those pioneers who once planted the flag of the eternal gospel in this region had. And with commitment they will continue to do the work motivated by the same expectation of Christ's soon return.

Chronology of Administrative Managers⁵⁸

President: Moisés Batista de Souza (2015-present).

Secretary: Francisco Carlos B. da Silva (2015-present).

Treasurers: Paulo R. Goncalves Coelho (2015-2018); Jairo Ricardo da G. Silva (2018-present).⁵⁹

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24. "Itaituba Ganha Templo e Macapá Inaugura SELS" ["Itaituba gets a Temple and Macapá inaugurates SELS"], *Revista Adventista* 75, no. 5 (May 1980): 34.
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26. "Cobertura Integral" ["Full Coverage"], *Revista Adventista* 77, no. 11 November (1982): 32.
27. "Missão Baixo Amazonas" ["Lower Amazonas Mission"], *Revista Adventista* 82, no. 6 (June 1986): 35.
28. "Criada mais uma Associação na UNB" ["Another Conference was created in the UNB"], *Revista Adventista* 92, no. 4 (April 1996): 19.
29. The Pathfinders Club is made up of "boys and girls aged 10 to 15, from different social classes, color, religion. They usually meet once a week, to learn and to develop talents, skills, perceptions and a taste for nature." These boys and girls "are thrilled with outdoor activities. They like camping, hiking, climbing, exploring the woods and caves. They know how to cook outdoors, making a fire without matches." Besides, they demonstrate "skill with discipline through drill commands and have their creativity awakened by manual arts. They also fight against the use of smoke, alcohol and drugs." *Seventh-day Adventist Church (Brazil) Website*, "Quem somos" ["About Us"], accessed February 4, 2020, <http://bit.ly/2FDRqTh>.
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32. "A Small Group is a group of people who meet weekly under the coordination of a leader aiming for spiritual, relational and evangelistic growth, with the goal of multiplication." *Seventh-day Adventist Church (Brazil) Website*, "Pequenos Grupos" ["Small Groups"], accessed February 4, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2NtcXj7>.
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59. More information about the MPA can be found on their website at <http://mpa.adventistas.org/> or through their social networks at Facebook and Twitter - @AdvParaAmapa, Instagram: @advparaamapa, and YouTube: Adventistas Pará Amapá [Pará Amapa Adventists].

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