

# Haitian Union Mission

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The Haitian Union Mission is one of the two French-speaking unions of the 24 unions that comprise the Inter-American Division of Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Geographically, it is one of the three Greater Antilles located in the Caribbean Sea. The Haitian Republic is bordered on its north by the Atlantic Ocean; on the south by the Caribbean Sea; on the east by the Dominican Republic; and on the west by the Windward Detroit, which distinguishes the entire island from the Cuban one. The general population of the Haitian Union's geographical territory is approximately 10,847,334 inhabitants,<sup>1</sup> and it covers 10,714 square miles, or 27,750 square kilometers of the island known as Hispaniola.<sup>2</sup>

The Haitian Union Mission covers a territory that holds several cultural treasures and a country that has a rich history full of vivid beauty and heartbreaking natural events.<sup>3</sup> The two official languages of the country are French and Haitian Creole with some light accents among the different regions of the country.

At the beginning of 2019, the Haitian Union Mission consisted of five fields, and among them are one conference and four missions, 472,667 church members in 612 organized churches, and 512 congregations under the leadership of 153 ordained ministers and 78 licensed ministers. The Haitian Union administers 169 elementary and secondary schools with 2,483 teachers and has a station radio with four regional branches in the north, the northwest, the south, and the southeast. There are 485 active colporteurs and two campground sites--one in the north and the other in the western part of the country.<sup>4</sup> The Inter-American Division Publishing Association (IADPA) administers seven branches of the publishing house within the Haitian territory. The Hope Channel, the Adventist television network, has been functioning since November 10, 2018, through a partnership established by the Haitian Union administration with a local company and the support of the French-Speaking Hope TV of the French Antilles and Guyana Union.<sup>5</sup>

## The Organizational History of the Haitian Union

The Haitian Union of Seventh-day Adventist Church was established in March 1989 as part of the reorganization of the French-Haitian Union. The French-Haitian Union was established in 1957 and began to operate with the administrative meeting held in August 13, 1957.<sup>6</sup> Its last session was held March 22, 1989, and the Haitian Union came to existence with this reorganization.<sup>7</sup> The Haitian Union at the beginning of its history was comprised of two local fields: The North Haiti Mission, whose headquarters was located in the city of Cap-Haitien, and the

South Haiti Mission, whose headquarters was in the capital of the country, Port-au-Prince.<sup>8</sup> The original headquarters of the Haitian Union was located at 431, Fontamara 27 in the western part of Port-au-Prince, the capital of the country, until it was moved in 1998 to 20 Xaragua Street in Delmas 31, HT 6120, where it continues to operate today.

Within the last two decades, the Haitian Union has grown a lot from two fields, the North and the South Haitian missions in 1998 to four fields by November 2009. It was comprised of the following fields: the North, Northwest, South Haitian missions, and one Conference: the Central Haitian Conference. Since July 2017, a fifth field--the Cul-De-Sac mission--was established in the city of Port-au-Prince, the capital of the country. As a result of the reorganization of the Central Conference, it is still the only conference in the Union.

The Haitian Union's ideals are expressed in its mission, vision, and values:

Mission: To glorify God and, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, lead each believer to experience a personal and transforming relationship with Christ, enabling him or her as a disciple to share the everlasting Gospel with all inhabitants.

Vision: To have every member of the body of Christ prepared for the kingdom of God.

Values: To give glory, integrity, respect, lifestyle, excellence, humility, compassion, fairness, commitment, and unity to God.

## Development

The Church in the territory of the Haitian Union grew a lot in the number of members and through needed reorganization. However, since the finances were not so strong as the membership, the efforts made with by the Inter-American Division administration and committee to lead to the establishment of new fields were not successful.<sup>9</sup> From April 18, 1994, to November 26, 1997, the Haitian Union operated with two fields--North and South, and two experimental fields called Coordinations--one in Gonaïves and the other in the city of Cayes in the south.<sup>10</sup>

Both Coordinations have grown and become two new missions--the Northwest and the South missions, and at the 1997 Year-end Executive Board of the Inter-American Division, the Haitian Union began to operate with four fields. All of these were missions: the North, the Northwest, the Central, and the South missions. At the year-end board meeting of the Haitian Union, new administrators for the two new fields were appointed.<sup>11</sup> In 2007, upon a territorial assessment of the Central Mission, the Central Conference was established in Port-au-Prince, and in 2017, from the territorial readjustment of the Central Conference, another field emerged: the Cul-De-Sac Mission, and its headquarters is in the capital, Port-au-Prince.

The Haitian Union manages five Institutions: The Adventist University of Haiti (Université Adventiste d'Haiti or UNAH); the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), formerly called Seventh-day Adventist World

Service (SAWS); the Voice of Hope radio station; the Adventist Hospital of Haiti, which is also part of the Adventist Hospitals Institutions (AHI); the Adventist Foundation for Education (Foundation for Adventist Education or FAE), and the Hope Channel's Haitian French-speaking branch that began to operate in November 10, 2018, with a partnership of the Haitian Union with a local TV called Tele Haiti.<sup>12</sup>

The geographic location of the Haitian Union makes it vulnerable to hurricanes, earthquakes, and other catastrophic events. This is the reason why ADRA, the social arm of the Church in the country, has always played an important role in helping the population. For example, on January 12, 2010, an earthquake measuring 7.0 in the Richter scale,<sup>13</sup> the most powerful in the last 100 years, affected the territory of the Haitian Union. About 1,000 Church members were affected, of whom 600 died as well as one Union Departmental leader. Forty-three temples and 15 schools collapsed, and many others were greatly damaged, particularly those in the western and the southern regions.<sup>14</sup>

The city of Leogane, close to the capital of the country, was almost totally destroyed. It was the home to the headquarters of many of the Union institutions and the Central Conference at that time. Thousands of families completely lost their homes as well as their livelihoods. To face this humanitarian crisis, ADRA served meals for thousands of people, donated clothes and home construction materials for the victims, and provided them with psychological assistance through the help of other International institutions.

## Growth Prospects for the Union

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Haiti has shared and will continue to share its message in various ways such as using radio, social media, and, more recently since November 2018, on television through the Hope Channel, whose programs cover a great part of the capital of the country and other great cities of the country.

## Chronology of Executive Officers

Presidents: Asser Jean-Pierre (1989-1998); Elie Henry (1998-2000); Etzer Obas (2000- 2005); Theart St Pierre (2005-2015); Pierre Caporal (2015- ).

Secretaries: Elie Henry (2001-2004); Theart St Pierre (2004-2005); Sylvain Blaise (2005-2008); Pierre-Caporal (2008-2015); Jean-Philippe Extrat (2015- ).

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## NOTES

1. "Our Culture and Tradition," Brice Foundation, accessed September 11, 2019, <https://www.bricefoundation.org/haitian-culture-and-tradition>.
2. "Haiti," Wikipedia®, March 9, 2017, accessed March 9, 2019, <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haiti>.
3. <https://restavekfreedom.org/2017/12/01/5-important-aspects-haitian-culture/>, accessed September 11, 2019.
4. Haitian Union Annual Statistical Report of 2018.
5. Minutes of the Haitian Union, date 2018, Haitian Union Secretary Archives, Port-Au-Prince, Haiti.
6. Benoit Pasteur-Emmanuel Clément, *l'Église Adventiste d'Haiti à la croisée des chemins*, 100 ans d'histoire. Printed at Presse de Media-texte, August 2005, Port-au-Prince, Haiti.
7. Ibid., 67.
8. Ibid.
9. Clément, 70, 71.
10. Minutes of the Haitian Union, Year-end meeting Executive board 1993, Haitian Union Secretary Archives, Port-Au-Prince, Haiti.
11. Clément, 72.
12. Minutes of the Haitian Union Executive committee, 2018.
13. Pallardy Richard, "2010 Haiti earthquake," accessed October 2, 2019, on Britannica.com.

14. Coordination Commission report of the Plans and Projects of the Union (CCOPPUMASH), published January 1, 2011.

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