

Southeast Peru Mission

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Southeast Peru Mission ([Misión Sur Oriental del Perú](#) or MSOP) is an administrative unit of the Seventh-day Adventist Church established in the South Peru Union Mission territory. Its offices are located on A-9 Parque Industrial in the city of Wanchaq, Cusco province, state of Cusco, Peru.¹

This administrative unit is responsible for leading the Adventist Gospel preaching in the departments of Apurímac, Cusco, and Madre de Dios. Altogether, the MSOP territory covers an area of 178,182.83 km², which houses 1,752,356 inhabitants² of whom 33,430 are Adventists. These members are spread in 437 congregations (122 organized churches and 315 groups).³ In short, there is currently one Adventist per 52 inhabitants.

In the MSOP territory, the Adventist Education Southeast Peru Conference (AEASOP) manages six Adventist Educational Institutions (IEA) that are based on Bible principles and permanent values in addition to having as a mission to “promote the integral development of students to form independent citizens that are committed to the community’s well-being, their homeland, and God.”⁴ The Adventist Educational Institutions in this field are: Pedro Kalbermatter de Abancay Adventist Academy, established on September 11, 1999, located on 200 Tacna Ave., Abancay, Apurímac; el Buen Maestro de Quillabamba Adventist Academy, established in 1992, located on 155 Jirón La Convención, Quillabamba, Cusco; Espinar Adventist Academy – CEPA, established in 1953, located on 209 Ricardo Palma Ave., Túpac Amaru district, Espinar, Cusco; José Pardo Adventist Academy, located on 928 Pardo [Paseo de los Héroes] Ave., Cusco; Huepetuhe Adventist Academy, located on 14th St. and crossed by the 2nd St., Huepetuhe district, Manu province, Madre de Dios department; James White Adventist Academy, established in 1967, located on 1001 28 de Julio Ave., Barrio Lindo, Puerto Maldonado, Madre de Dios. All these Academies offer preschool, primary and secondary education.

As for the number of staff members, until the end of 2017, the Southeast Peru Mission had 335 associates. Of these, 39 were pastors, 20 with ministerial credentials and 19 with ministerial licenses; and 35 other workers with missionary credentials.⁵

Origin of the Adventist Work in the Territory of the Mission

The history of Adventism in what is presently called the MSOP is strongly connected with the work started by the first Adventist pioneers in Southern Peru at the beginnings of the 20th century. What differentiates it from other South American countries is that the Gospel arrived in Peru through lay and self-sustaining people efforts and

not really from selling Christian literature.⁶ Shortly, with the arrival of Fernando and Ana Stahl in 1909, there was a stronger missionary emphasis to work in the Andean region of the country.⁷ Thus, by means of the efforts and work of the Pastor Stahl, who received help from other workers who were among the Aymara Indians, the SDA outreach grew in the number of new Adventist believers. Consequently, from the creation of the Inca Union Mission (UI, presently the South Peru Union Mission) in 1914, made up of Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru⁸ and headquartered in Lima, the Lake Titicaca Mission (MLT) originated in 1916. This Mission, at the time, covered the Puno, Cusco, and Madre de Dios districts in Peru and part of the Lake Titicaca basin in Bolivia.⁹

There are few historic references to the establishment of Adventism in the territory. Yet, there are records indicating that the preaching of the Gospel in the old MLT territory was not easy. The people didn't sympathize with it and weren't amiable to the Adventist missionaries, with some even gathering to for attacking, hurting, or killing them. Some Brothers did lose their lives in this region while working on behalf of Jesus Christ's good tidings.¹⁰ But such events didn't discourage them nor did they reduce the efforts of the next evangelists. In fact, the Gospel did not only arrive through preaching the Word, selling Christian literature, and health assistance. All these activities were interlaced, and the establishment of schools joined them as education became the main evangelistic tool in the cities of Andean highlands.

Until 1919, the year in which Fernando Stahl and his family returned to EE.UU., the Stahls had worked most of the time with the Aymara Indians, and in some sporadic trips, they weren't able to assist the Quechuan people much who for a few years had sought help and workers who could work with them.¹¹ Later in the same year, as a Divine answer, the General Conference appointed Pedro Kalbermatter, an Argentine missionary, to work among the Indians. Pedro and his wife Guillermina dedicated about 20 years of their lives to fulfilling the dream of working with the Indians in Peru.¹² They first established the work in Platería and Juliaca, then in the cities of Laro, Huancayo, and Huanta until 1927. "These places were scenes of dramatic events and conflicts opposing his ministry."¹³

In this context, around the beginning of the 1930s, Kalbermatter went to the city of Andahuaylas where he worked as health professional. Although from the beginning he had great acceptance from the people who were being treated with hydrotherapy, some civil and religious authorities didn't see the good intentions he had, accusing him of illegal medical practice. However, the citizens came to his defense, even to the point that "the city's leading men gathered to seek for advice and then sent a delegation to the court to inform the government doctor that if he didn't withdraw from his post, they would expel him from the city by force." Thus, over time, Pedro was named by the Honorable Provincial Council as Health Provincial Inspector. This position enabled him to bring and distribute books and magazines to the people in these districts, to teach principles of hygiene and the harmful effects of alcohol, coca, and tobacco as soon as he started working as government vaccinator.¹⁴

In another occasion, Pedro Kalbermatter had a dream, and in response to it, he traveled 19 km with his children, on a mule, towards the city of Cusco. In this city, he was appointed as head nurse at the important Belén

Hospital, which was later called Antonio Lorena Hospital. He also organized a Nursing School that was attended by over than 50 students, and he also worked as a professor of theory and practice. Meanwhile, with unflinching dedication, he assisted those who needed health care at home, which awakened the willingness and interest of the inhabitants towards the Gospel.¹⁵

Nine years later, in 1939, a Peru correspondent published an article in the Brazilian *Revista Adventista* [translated in English as *Adventist Review*]. His testimony had the objective of submitting the challenges that the Adventist Church faced in the high plateau region and what still needed to be done for the work's progress. Among his statements, we read: "Our district covers the following departments in southern Peru: Puno, Cusco, Arequipa, Moquegua, Tacna, and Madre de Dios. Our work is more established in Puno, where we have nine missionary central posts, the missionary school, and the medical institution. Meanwhile, we still have a great field to explore. The Indians usually live in small centers or villages called 'ailos.' From the top of a hill, we often see dozens of these 'ailos,' and in its majority there are no believers. We must bring the message very soon."¹⁶ The author added that the canvassers kept progressing, disseminating the Gospel through publications, but these actions weren't enough, and they needed evangelists to join them in their work.

The city of Cusco is a very important city in Peru. It is historically considered the Incan capital, the navel of the world that represents well the centuries of the great empire that worshiped the sun god. The Adventist presence during the first half of the 20th century was already established thanks to the missionaries and ecclesiastical efforts. In addition, the transmission of the three angels' messages became real through the radio ministry that increased the evangelism to that city. In 1949, the radio program *Voz de la Profecía* [Voice of Prophecy] was being listened to in every street of Cusco. As a result, the Gospel was found in places that many previously could not easily reach.¹⁷

In 1951, two years later, in the same city, due to a great earthquake, many buildings were damaged and destroyed, among them the main Adventist temple. For that reason, with the purpose of worshiping and witnessing for the Son of Justice, the leaders decided to rebuild the whole church because a renovation would not be enough. Thus, five years after the tragedy, on September 29, 1956, with Pastor E. W. Murray's presence, the president of the South American Division (SAD) and other leaders of the local field and of all the community carried out a very special worship in which the Cusco Adventist Church was dedicated to the Lord. Subsequently, in that same year, Pastor Peverini, an evangelist of the Inca Union, and a group of workers conducted a successful series of evangelistic meetings.¹⁸ Thus, Fernando Stahl, Pedro Kalbermatter, and their families' pioneering work in these lands grew, and the expansion created the need for establishing a new administrative unit to serve their brethren even better.¹⁹

Until 1967, the MLT covered the Apurímac, Arequipa, Cusco, Madre de Dios, Moquegua, Puno, and Tacna regions; it had 42 organized churches and 10,457 members in a population of 2,437,100 inhabitants.²⁰ It was this growth that precisely led them to its following reorganization and name change. Therefore, since that year, the

Lake Titicaca Mission took the name of South Peru Mission (MPS).²¹ The previous name possibly didn't accurately represent all of its territorial expansion since it no longer covered the surrounding areas of Lake Titicaca (Platería, Chucuito, and Umuchi), but covered all southern region of Peru.²²

About 10 years later, the Survey commission was created for forming a new Mission. Then, in 1975, the Inca Union Mission Executive Board, following the MPS report, suggested dividing the field and creating a new Mission. Thus, in January 1977, the southern region of Peru division was created.²³ The new Mission took the name of South Peru Mission (MPS), and it has led the work in a territory that covers six regions: Apurímac, Arequipa, Cusco, Madre de Dios, Moquegua, and Tacna.²⁴ At the time, throughout all the MPS territory, there were 27 churches, 80 organized groups, and a membership of 5,311 people spread in 16 missionary districts.²⁵ On the other hand, the administration of the old MPS, which was headquartered in the city of Puno and already reorganized, would only watch over the Puno region, and for this reason, they took up the name of the historic Lake Titicaca Mission.²⁶

In the 1980s, the Church continued advancing in its evangelistic duty, bringing the message to every tribe, language, and people. Hence, fulfilling its original mission, in 1984 in the city of Cusco, a Quechua-speaking small group of believers was organized²⁷ in an evangelistic unit of the Cusco Central Church. At the time, six Sabbath School classes of Quechua speakers were formed with a total of 98 members, and later they organized a church specially for Quechua speakers.²⁸ In fact, all the efforts made by the pastors, leaders, and brothers full of Jesus' love led 30 churches and 7,930 members in 1980 to organize, until 1989, 20 new churches and 18,861 new brothers in Christ.²⁹

Then, due to the exponential growth in the decades that preceded the new millennium,³⁰ with the need for taking care and better guiding the churches in the field and with the purpose of preserving members, in 2005, the MPS requested for a Survey commission that would consider the territory's division. In November of the same year, the Inca Union Mission (UP, currently the South Peru Union Mission) Plenary Board agreed on authorizing the study of the territory's division to organize a Conference and a Mission.³¹

Mission Organizational History

In 2006, the UP received the authorization, so the Survey commission project was developed and presented to the South American Division for approval. In the same year, the SAD revised the project and made some recommendations to the Union. Among those suggestions, the UP was advised that the territory's division still had to wait because the Peru Union Mission itself would be divided into two fields: the North Peru Union Mission (UPN) and the South Peru Union Mission. Thus, in July 2007, the MPS presented the project's changes to the newly formed the South Peru Union Mission, requesting the forming of a new Mission. The South Peru Union Mission board agreed to accept the MPS request, giving rise to a new administrative unit.³²

Then, on December 9, 2007, the project was implemented before both the SAD and the South Peru Union Mission administrators. During this occasion, challenges facing the creation of a new Mission were outlined. Notwithstanding, the creation of a new Mission still hadn't been voted by the SAD until July 10, 2008, when the definitive vote in the Plenary Session was made and "the project of creating the new mission" was approved. Thus, Southeast Peru Mission (MSOP) emerged from the MPS, a territory which would cover the Cusco, Madre de Dios, and Apurímac regions. For this great challenge, the leaders responsible for overseeing the work from its headquarters in Wanchaq, Cusco, were pastors Abimael Obando and Ramiro Diaz, president and secretary respectively, and joining them as treasurer was Tobías Chávez llempén.³³

With the MSOP's creation, more new great challenges came about. However, the economic problems were subsidized by the Division through the South Peru Union Mission and the MPS. At the time, thanks to the faithful and regular growth in numbers of church members, a growth of 25 percent in tithes was achieved, and this contributed for the financial support of the early MSOP.

As expected, MSOP growth was progressive. In 2010, the MSOP had 90 churches, 223 congregations, and a membership of 22,555.³⁴ In 2012, the MSOP's growth rate increased 12.90 percent above the past year.³⁵ Due to this growth, the MSOP could open new missionary districts and call more pastors to work in its vast field. That's how, in 2015, the MSOP reached a total of 32 districts, 110 churches, and more than 30,000 baptized members.

In 2016, the MSOP ended up with a membership of 30,118 people, 110 churches, and 258 congregations.³⁶ In the same year, the MSOP was able to baptize 2,873 people,³⁷ while from 2017 to 2018, it reached a total of 5,785 new members,³⁸ and its growth rate in tithes and offerings increased by 19 percent.³⁹

This growth has taken place in the last few years due to the strong emphasis on evangelization which the MSOP has been working with. An active missionary work has been done through projects such as Misión Caleb [Caleb Mission], which involves its youth and teenagers in missionary activities; and the project Impacto Esperanza [Hope Impact], which involves the participation of many of the church members distributing free literature, trying to present the Advent message to the greatest number of people they can. On the other hand, in 2015, the MSOP promoted many evangelistic series, and among them, one was directed by Pastor Alejandro Bullón. This week of meetings was called "Esperanza Viva" [Living Hope], and it led hundreds of people to baptism⁴⁰ in addition to involving and strengthening many church members' faith.

The work with youth in the MSOP is conducted by two specific and traditional departments--the Pathfinders and Adventurers clubs. The latter has 722 participants and 28 clubs all over its field, and it seeks to develop activities for kids from 6 to 9 years old. Meanwhile, the Pathfinders club has 1,203 participants and 41 clubs throughout the Mission, leading boys and girls from 10 to 15 years old to activities such as camping, hiking, and other physical activities in addition to combatting the use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs. Both departments base their actions in the sole objective of presenting salvation through Jesus Christ to these young people.⁴¹

From June 28 to July 2, 2017, the II Southeast Peru Mission Camporee called “Venciendo Gigantes” [Defeating Giants] took place in the San Antonio farm in the city of Abancay, Apurímac province. This important church youth event had more than 400 Pathfinders who “took part in various activities in the Regional Government campsite, with workshops, contests, music, trainings, and leisure.” And they also kept handing out the book “En Busca de Esperanza” [In Search of Hope] (the missionary book for the year) on the main avenues of the city. And lastly, on Sabbath morning, 15 young Pathfinders were baptized and “hundreds of other Pathfinders committed themselves to serve the work as pastors, doctors, and missionary teachers and to assist more young people.”⁴²

Nowadays, the MSOP, with 437 congregations, continues serving the mission of proclaiming the eternal Gospel through the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14: 6-12. This message invites people to become Jesus Christ’s disciples and to prepare themselves for His soon return. And the members of the MSOP carry out this mission by living a Christlike life: preaching, discipling, teaching, healing, and serving others. All this aligned with the great Scripture prophecies and God’s plan to restore all things according to His perfect will and righteousness.

However, even with so many activities for involving SDA members in the mission of preaching the Gospel, there are still challenges facing the MSOP. One of them is to turn each new believer into a disciple who brings others to the kingdom of God, thus avoiding abandoning the faith. The past has taught the Church many lessons, and what has been learned from the MSOP’s history is that God blesses everyone’s missionary efforts, and as a result, all His people. The beginning of Adventism was carried out through the individual work of brave men who, not fearing for their lives, surrendered all because in their minds they were never alone. They counted on God and believed that it was God who gave them the sowing, the good harvest, and the permanence of fruits. And so it is with missionaries today. If you work hand in hand with the Lord, there will be nothing to fear regarding the future. Aligned with these and other truths, Adventists in the MSOP keep spreading the Eternal Gospel and fulfilling their parts in the mission.

Chronology of Administrative Leaders⁴³

Presidents: Abimael Obando (2009); Ramiro Diaz (2010-2015); Milton Cueva (2016-2017); Raúl Yaranga (2018-present).

Secretaries: Ramiro Diaz (2009); Edmundo Carcagno (2010); Heber Bendezú (2011); Rufo Jaimes Zubiata (2012-2013); José Chávez (2014-2017); Josué Llempén (2018-present).

Treasurers: Tobías Chávez Llempén (2009-2010); Marcial Carrasco (2011); David Valencia (2012-2015); Walter Vallejos (2016-2017); Jorge Moncada (2018-present).⁴⁴

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