



South-West Liberia Conference.

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Formerly part of Liberia Mission, the South-West Liberia Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church was organized in 2013 and is one of the administrative units in West Africa Union Mission in the West-Central Africa Division of Seventh-day Adventists. Its territory is comprised of Bomi, Gbarpolu, Grand Cape Mount, and Montserrado counties. Its headquarters is in Monrovia, Liberia.

Statistics (June 30, 2021): Churches, 22; membership, 17,776; population, 1,902,096

History

The origins of Adventism in Liberia apparently date back to 1889 and to the missionary efforts of “Bro. Gaston from Liberia, who recently embraced the truth, and has gone back to his country to sow the seeds of precious

truth among his kindred.”² Lawrence C. Chadwick gave a report to the General Conference session of January 1892 about his tour of West Africa to survey it for missionary activities. In his report he appealed that a missionary be sent to open a mission “at or near the home of Brother Gaston.”³ But it took 33 more years for missionaries to be sent to Liberia.⁴

In 1926 the European Division sent R. Helbig and E. Flammer from Germany to Liberia. They were met by L.F. Langford, Adventist missionary from England, who had worked previously in the Gold Coast. Together they found a suitable site at Seahn, Grand Bassa County, for the first Adventist mission. The next year Helbig and Flammer secured from the government a grant of 100 acres (40 hectares) of land for 99 years, on which were built the first school, church, and dispensary. Early in 1927 K. Noltze arrived from Germany to assist in the work in Liberia and remained there for 15 years. On April 30, 1930, the first four Adventist converts were baptized at Seahn. Among them was Willie Helbig, who later became the first Liberian ordained minister. Later D.K. Reider arrived to join the missionary families, while Noltze and Reider were sent to Liiwa, in the Gbarnga district, to begin another mission station. In 1933 the Adventist mission work was strengthened with the arrival of I.W. Harding, an African, who had been sent as a missionary from neighboring Sierra Leone to Lower Buchanan in Liberia.⁵

In 1935 K. Noltze established the Konola Mission, where in 1937 he opened a boarding school for boys, which later became an accredited boarding academy for both boys and girls, the Konola Academy. More workers would come to Liberia. N.S. Durning, an African pastor from Sierra Leone, was sent to Liberia in 1937 for schoolwork at Konola, and stayed there until 1939. In 1936 T.N. Ketola, from Finland, arrived at the Konola Station, and was moved to Liiwa Station in the following year. He returned to Konola in 1941, after Noltze moved back to Germany.⁶ This time, Ketola stayed in Konola for two years, bought property, and built a mission headquarters in Monrovia, the capital city of Liberia, in 1942. He moved to the United States in 1943.⁷

In 1942 overseas missionaries had to leave Liberia because of World War II. Thus, I.W. Harding was appointed as the first African mission president in 1942. Under his leadership, the Liberia Mission expanded across Liberia, with three mission stations in Grand Bassa, Bong, and Margibi counties.⁸

In 1945 the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists sent three Black American missionaries and their families to Liberia: G.N. Banks, who became president and secretary-treasurer of the mission; P.E. Giddings, the principal of the Konola School; and C.D. Henri, evangelist and leader in the Bassa district. Since 1945 Black missionaries from the United States have held the leadership of the field.⁹

Due to the Liberian civil unrest between 1989 and 2003, a large part of the population became refugees. Many church members and pastors were scattered to remote areas of Liberia and to neighboring countries. The mission headquarters was destroyed by fire. In 1991, the Liberia Mission was relocated from 120 Camp Johnson Road, Monrovia, to another building purchased by the Church on Sinkor Old Road in Monrovia. After the civil

war the church experienced rapid growth, necessitating reorganization of the Liberia Mission. That was done in 2013, when three administrative units were created: the South-West Liberia Conference, the Central Liberia Mission Station, and the South-East Liberia Mission Station.¹⁰

Organization

In November 2012 the West-Central Africa Division at its year-end meeting reorganized the Liberia Mission into two missions and one conference. At its first constituency held in Monrovia Central Church on March 21-23, 2013, the newly-organized conference was named South-West Liberia Conference with headquarters in Sinkor Old Road, Monrovia. In 2014 it had the following statistics: Churches, 16; membership, 11,276; population of 1,599,890, 5 secondary schools, and one FM radio Station.¹¹

The voted administrators of the conference's first session were Rufus K. Freeman, president, John Y. Flomo, executive secretary, and George J. Davis, treasurer.¹² The first executive committee Members were Rufus K. Freeman, John Y. Flomo, George J. Davis, Dixon Seboe, Benjamin Karn, Yah Zolia, Jose B. Watson, Theresa Sheriff, Gemene G. Getteh, Borbor D. Gibson, and Bemah Lassana.¹³

Administrators

Presidents: Rufus K. Freeman (2013-2021), John G. Diabegeh (2021-).

Secretaries: John Y. Flomo (2013-2021), Arve S. Sivili, Jr (2021 -)

Treasurers: George Davis (2013-2019), Napolain Watts (2019-2021), Bayougar Moses Kangar (2021 -)

SOURCES

"Liberia." *African Seventh-day Adventist History (ASAH)*. Accessed April 13, 2022.

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Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook, various years. <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/>.

NOTES

1. "South-West Liberia Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (2021). Accessed April 13, 2022,

<https://www.adventistyearbook.org/entity?EntityID=52317>.

2. The General Conference Daily Bulletin of October 24, 1889, as cited in "Liberia," *African Seventh-day Adventist History (ASAH)*. Accessed April 13, 2022, <https://www.africansdahistory.org/liberia/>.

3. GC Daily Bulletin 5:2, January 29, 1893, as cited in "Liberia," *African Seventh-day Adventist History (ASAH)*. Accessed April 13, 2022, <https://www.africansdahistory.org/liberia/>.
 4. "Liberia," *African Seventh-day Adventist History (ASAH)*. Accessed April 13, 2022, <https://www.africansdahistory.org/liberia/>.
 5. Ibid.
 6. Ibid.
 7. Ibid.
 8. Ibid.
 9. Ibid.
 10. "South-West Liberia Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (2021).
 11. Ibid.
 12. Ibid.
 13. Records of the South-West Liberia Conference.
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