



The corner stone was placed to the right of the Amman Adventist Church entrance after it was constructed. It says: "The church was dedicated to serve God and Man," and is followed by the Bible verse from Hebrews 3:4. The church was dedicated on December 25, 1954.

Photo courtesy of Anees Abdelnour.

## Jordan

### MELANIE RICHES WIXWAT, AND SVEN HAGEN JENSEN

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## Background

Jordan ( ), officially the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, is a country in Western Asia. Situated at the crossroads of Asia, Africa, and Europe, within the Levant region and on the East Bank of the Jordan River, it is bordered by Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Syria, Israel, and the West Bank of Palestine.

The Dead Sea is located alongside its western borders, and the country has a 26-kilometer (16 mi) coastline on the Red Sea in its extreme southwest. Amman is the nation's capital and largest city (5 mill.), as well as the economic, political, and cultural center. The country is semi-arid covering an area of 89,342 sq. km (34,495 sq. mi), with an estimated population of well over ten million. The dominant majority, or around 95 percent of the country's population, is Sunni Muslim, with a native Christian minority.<sup>1</sup>

The present country of Jordan includes various regions described in the Bible lands traversed by Abraham in his wanderings, inhabited by the time of the Exodus by the Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, Canaanites, and Amorites, and occupied in large part of by the Israelites at the height of their power. Jordan's capital, Amman, is the site of ancient Rabbath-Ammon, taken by King David about 1000 B.C.<sup>2</sup>

The land was overrun by the Assyrians and the Babylonians in the eighth and sixth centuries B.C., destroying the Northern and Southern Kingdoms consecutively, resulting in the ten lost tribes and exiling the Jews. The western part was resettled by the Samaritans and after the Babylonian captivity by returning Jews. After this the land was ruled successively by the Persian, Macedonian, and Roman Empires, and the south was part of the flourishing Semitic Nabataean kingdom. Jordan embraces part of what in New Testament times was called Peraea and Decapolis.<sup>3</sup>

The area of what is now Jordan and the West Bank became largely Christianized in the early centuries. After the Muslim Arabs defeated the Byzantine emperor Heraclius at the Yarmouk River in 636 C.E., the country became overwhelmingly Muslim. The Crusader kingdom that occupied a large part of the country in the twelfth century did not change the basic Arab and Muslim character of the country.

Later came centuries of Turkish overlordship until 1917. After World War I the area came under British control, the western portion a part of the mandate of Palestine and Transjordan as a constitutional state (Emirate of Transjordan) under British tutelage.<sup>4</sup> After World War II, on March 22, 1946, the Treaty of London was signed by the British Government and Emir Abdullah of Transjordan recognizing the independence of Transjordan to be ratified by both countries' parliaments.

On May 25, 1946, the treaty was ratified by the Transjordan parliament, and the Transjordan raised to the status of a kingdom under the name of the *Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan* and with Abdullah I as its first king. In the partition of Palestine in 1948, Transjordan took over the Arab remainder of Palestine, and the country was renamed Jordan. Until the six-day Arab-Israeli war in June 1967, the territory of Jordan also included Jerusalem and the Westbank of Palestine. Jordan renounced, however, its claim to the territory in 1988 and became the second Arab state to sign a peace treaty with Israel in 1994.<sup>5</sup>

Jordan has been repeatedly referred to as an “oasis of stability” in the turbulent region of the Middle East. It has been mostly unscathed by the violence that swept the region following the Arab Spring in 2010. From as early as 1948, Jordan has accepted refugees from multiple neighboring countries in conflict. An estimated 2.1 million Palestinian and 1.4 million Syrian refugees are present in Jordan (2015 census). The kingdom has also been a refuge to thousands of Iraqi Christians fleeing persecution by ISIL. While Jordan continues to accept refugees, the recent large influx from Syria has placed substantial strain on the national resources and infrastructure.<sup>6</sup>

## Beginnings of Seventh-day Adventist Work (1900 to 1930)

Seventh-day Adventist work in the early 1900s was conducted on both sides of the Jordan River from Jerusalem, headquarters of the Palestine-Transjordan Mission.<sup>7</sup> Tigran Zacharian was an Armenian colporteur who was working around Jerusalem at that time. In 1912 he made a trip east of the Jordan River to the Transjordan and left publications at Es-Salt among other places. The following year in 1913 Ibrahim El-Khalil (one of the earlier converts to Christianity baptized in Lebanon by Walter Ising in 1911) held evangelistic meetings there but was forced to leave a year later due to World War I. The seeds had been planted, however, and as a result of his work, Michael Hilal El-Haddad began to keep the Sabbath and pay tithe.<sup>8</sup> He is believed to be the first known Jordanian man to accept the Adventist message.<sup>9</sup>

All contact was lost for 13 years until 1922 when connections were reestablished by representatives from the Middle East Division in Lebanon. Between 1925 and 1926, the first Arabic Sabbath School quarterlies were printed in Jerusalem and distributed around the Transjordan. On April 2, 1926, Elder George Keough conducted the very first baptism of twelve in the River Jabbok near Es-Salt, and shortly later the first church was organized.<sup>10</sup>

By the early 1930s around twenty members from Michael Haddad’s family (Najeeb, Samuel, Yousef, Miriam and Hillal Haddad along with their spouses) were baptized, constituting most of the members of the growing church in Es-Salt. They began an elementary school in 1934, but it closed in 1938, and a church building was erected later but sold in 1954. Due to persecution in their hometown, most of the Haddads moved to Amman and joined a small fellowship of believers there.<sup>11</sup>

The extended family became the backbone of the Adventist Church in Jordan. They were successful financially, owned many stores and businesses, and supported the church for many years.<sup>12</sup> In particular, Najeeb Haddad, along with his brothers Samuel and Yousef (elders for many years at the Amman church) and sons, donated a lot of money and purchased properties on which were built churches and schools, including the church and school in Amman, church and school in Irbid, and the Madaba and Zarqa churches.

The Adventist message slowly began to take root in other parts of the country. In the beginning of 1930, Shukri Nowfel (the first Lebanese Arabic pastor in Lebanon) arrived in the Transjordan to assist a local convert, W. G. Steffan, in conducting a short series of meetings at Al-Husn (40 miles north of Amman). The results were

another baptism of twelve on Thursday, May 8, 1930, held in the Sea of Galilee.<sup>13</sup> These converts were subsequently organized into a company and Sabbath school, led by Steffan. An experienced native worker from Egypt was arranged by Nils Zerne, superintendent of the Syrian Mission, to spend the summer months assisting the fledgling church and others in the Transjordan area.<sup>14</sup> At the end of the second quarter, another series of baptisms were conducted at Al-Husn.<sup>15</sup>

A small school was subsequently opened there in 1931 under the direction of Ibrahim El-Khalil. It closed in 1948 due to lack of teachers but reopened in 1951 under Najeeb Azar. By 1954 it had become a four-teacher school with more than eighty students, ranging from kindergarten to secondary school, operating under principal Naim Owais.<sup>16</sup> A school building and church auditorium was constructed in 1956, and in 1960 Mousa Azar became principal until it closed permanently in 1963.<sup>17</sup>

In the meanwhile, the little company in Amman began to grow. Adventist missionary Erich Bethmann, who had been pastoring in Upper Egypt, moved to Jordan in 1933 where he ministered for four years to the little group of believers there.<sup>18</sup> The first fruits of his labor resulted in a baptism on May 18, 1935, at the station camp several miles outside of Amman. One couple came from Safed in Upper Galilee (believed to be the “city that is set on a hill,” referred to by Christ), and the other couple from Al Husn. Bethmann extended his work to Ma’an (120 miles south of Amman) and Zarqa (20 miles north of Amman near the Jabbok River), holding meetings at a military camp in which attended several soldiers, two officers, a military surgeon and his wife and a captain.<sup>19</sup>

Up until the partition in 1948, West Jerusalem was part of the Transjordan (Jordan Section). Therefore, it should be noted that the Adventist Church operated a hydrotherapy and electrotherapy clinic in the center of Jerusalem. It was begun by J. H. Krum from Germany in the beginning of 1901, who was joined later in November by S. Jespersson and his wife from Basel, Switzerland. In 1904 Krum left due to ill health, and in 1905 Jespersson was sent to Algeria to begin “medical missionary” work there. However, by 1908 the health institution, which was patronized by people of many nationalities, was almost self-supporting. It was moved to a better location in 1910 and finally closed by the Turkish government in 1916.<sup>20</sup>

## Development of the Church Work (1940s up to 2000)

As the little company in Amman began to grow, an elementary school for girls was opened in 1942 under the direction of Ruby Williams, a Bible instructor and pioneer missionary. In the beginning before the new building was ready, the school was held in the homes of the members, moving from one house to another every month. When Farid Srour (whose family was among the first converts in Syria) came to the Transjordan, he was put in charge of supervising the erection of the new school building, on land that was purchased by Najeeb Haddad<sup>21</sup>

It was partially completed in time for the 1948 to 1949 school year with 55 students enrolled in five grades and Hanna Jubran as its first principal.<sup>22</sup> In an interview in 1962 with Ministry Magazine, Williams recalls: “We began our school in Amman in a partially completed building. Each Friday we had to take out all the desks from two of

the three rooms and replace them with folding chairs. Then we removed the movable doors between two rooms to make a large room for the Sabbath service.<sup>23</sup> Some of the first teachers included Ghazala Khalil, J. S. Russell, and Miss Wadad and her sister.<sup>24</sup> Classes were gradually added until 1959 when the first girls' class graduated from secondary school (12<sup>th</sup> grade).<sup>25</sup> Additional classrooms were built in 1958, and a large auditorium was added in 1964. The school eventually became co-ed, as it is today (2022).

At the same time the girls' school moved into the new building in 1948, Mousa Azar attempted to operate a boys' school in Amman.<sup>26</sup> It began in a small rental, large room/hall, but was short-lived. In 1952 Ibrahim Ayoub tried again but was unsuccessful.<sup>27</sup>

By 1948 the little company in Amman had thirty-five members under the leadership of Shafic Farag.<sup>28</sup> Plans were put into motion in 1953 by the Middle East Division to build a church building on the same property as the school, under the leadership of Na'im Mashni, who served as pastor of the Amman Church and president of Jordan Mission at the same time.<sup>29, 30</sup>

Construction began and a year later on December 25, 1954, and with a seating capacity of up to 200, the new church was dedicated. A day before opening, church members gathered the poor, lame, and the blind from the city's multitude of refugees and poverty-stricken inhabitants for a feast in the courtyard. In addition, on the morning of the dedication day, Mousa Azar was ordained as the first minister. The church building also hosted the second biennial session of the Jordan Mission.<sup>31</sup>

The 1940s and 50s witnessed a strong evangelism thrust that resulted in a rapid expansion of the work in Jordan. Successful efforts were reported by R. C. Darnell, George Keough, Chafic Srour, Mousa Azar, and Najeeb Azar as Bible studies and baptisms took place in Oder, Amman, Al-Husn, Zarqa, and Ada in the early 1940s.<sup>32</sup> In 1946 Shafic Farag, an evangelist from Egypt, was sent by Neil Wilson, president of the Egyptian Mission, to conduct a series of efforts in the Transjordan.<sup>33</sup> Anees Haddad from Lebanon served the church as evangelist between 1953 and 1954.<sup>34</sup> Other evangelists from Lebanon periodically came to conduct efforts during the latter half of the 1960s, including Salim Khabbaz and George Khoury (associate evangelist for the Middle East Division).

Workers in the Jordan Mission began to combine evangelistic efforts with education in order to further the spread of the Adventist message. Using the Amman Girls' School as an evangelistic center, teachers Angel and Rose Dikran conducted branch Sabbath Schools and other types of missionary work. Rosalie Wainer gave Bible studies and visited church members while Ibrahim Ayoub spent after-school hours to translate, conduct church services, and provide assistance in the affairs of mission.<sup>35</sup>

When in 1959 successful efforts again took place in Al-Husn and Amman, Pastor Chafic Srour writes: "Young people of the Amman Girls' School are doing a splendid job in conducting branch Sabbath Schools and securing Bible Correspondence School enrollments."<sup>36</sup>

With the opening of church schools all around the country, Junior Missionary Volunteer (JMV) programs were organized with related activities, daily worship in the schools and systematic Bible classes.<sup>37</sup> Anees Haddad directed the first Jordan JMV camps in the summer of 1954—one for the girls and another for the boys. After several years there was a growing conviction for the camp to be mixed for the summer of 1960. At first there were a number of conservative objections, but finally the plan was put into effect, and a successful co-ed JMV camp was held.<sup>38</sup>

Other schools and churches began to spring up in the 1950s and 60s, and active Sabbath Schools were established in the homes of members at Amman Station, Ram Allah, and in churches and schools at Amman, Al-Husn, and Al-Karak. Members also met in small, rented chapels that were used for evangelistic meetings in Zarqa and Irbid.<sup>39</sup>

A new school opened in Al-Karak in 1955 after the baptism of Isbir Madant (by Najeeb Azar), a man who had observed the Sabbath since 1927 but who until 1954 had been unknown to Seventh-day Adventists. This school closed in 1962.<sup>40</sup>

Another convert, Tawfiq Madanat, became an Adventist in the 1960s after attending the Al-Karak Church with Pastor Fayez Farag from Egypt. He attended Middle East College, graduating in 1965 with a major in education and Arabic language, eventually returning to Jordan to teach in the Al-Husn, Irbid, and Amman schools. He became principal of the Amman school from 1971 to 1977 and then again in 1985, after the Amman school bus was involved in a tragic accident that led to the deaths of 17 students and faculty. Madanat stayed as principal for another 34 years until his retirement in 2019.<sup>41</sup> Karina Bresla from Argentina is the current (2022) principal.<sup>42</sup>

Between 1966 and 1970 three more churches and a school were established under the leadership of Pastor Bill Clemens, the Jordan Mission president at that time.

A small group of believers began meeting in Zarqa in 1966 with Pastor Beshara Taweel. It is still operating today (2022) under the care of Pastor Samir Haddad.<sup>43</sup> In Irbid around the same period, Najeeb Haddad donated property on which the Irbid Adventist Church (presently existing in 2022) and school were built. The first church pastor was Najeeb Azar and the first principal of the school, Muneef Shawareb. Mary Dowais became principal in 1983 and continued for the next 37 years until her retirement in 2020, after which the school was closed.<sup>44</sup>

The Madaba Adventist Church began around 1968. Its first pastor, Kamil Haddad held services at an old property near the Catholic Church until late 1969 when his father, Najeeb Haddad, purchased land on which to construct the church. Najeeb later developed shops on the property, using the proceeds for financial support. In 2011 Pastor Samir Haddad became pastor and continues till the present (2022).<sup>45</sup>

## Other Programs and Entities Established

The Seventh-day Adventist Welfare Society (SAWS) was officially registered in Jordan in 1956. Clothes, baskets of food, and money were distributed yearly to the thousands of needy.<sup>46</sup> The Jordan Welfare Society was subsequently organized in 1964.<sup>47</sup>

In the 1960s literature evangelism was carried out mostly by students working in the summers.<sup>48</sup> Shahir Qussus, a teacher at the school in Amman, managed the health program by correspondence for many years for the Jordan Section. He was also the liaison and custodian for the variety of books acquired from the Middle East Press in Lebanon, which students and full-time colporteurs used to sell in Jordan.<sup>49</sup> Qussus also directed the Amman Voice of Prophecy School. April 17, 1973 was a milestone in the history of the school as 80 students prepared for the first graduation ceremony.<sup>50</sup>

Like all Middle Eastern countries, Jordan had a high proportion of smokers in all age groups. Clinics for Five-Day plans for stop smoking were conducted all over Jordan in the 1960s and 70s, the first one in 1965 by Anees Haddad and H. C. Lamp.<sup>51</sup> In 1967 Rueben Lorenson, physical therapist and health educator in the Jordan Section, conducted the first public health emphasis week in the auditorium of the Amman Girls' School auditorium.<sup>52</sup>

By the early 1970s a plethora of anti-tobacco education broadcasts in the name of the church were being heard all over Jordan. The result was a collaboration between the Jordan Cancer Society and the "Reach Out for Life Team" with Shehada Halabi (EMR health/temperance secretary), Jack Mahon (Middle East Union health/temperance secretary), and Jerald Whitehouse in conducting Five-Day programs on smoking and health in many cities and towns across Jordan. It also opened a way for a wider circulation of health publications.<sup>53, 54</sup>

## Amman Care Home

The Six-Day War, also known as the June War, the 1967 Arab–Israeli War or the Third Arab–Israeli War, was an armed conflict fought from June 5 to 10, 1967, between Israel and an Arab coalition primarily comprising Jordan, Syria, and UAR Egypt.<sup>55</sup>

Six days of fierce fighting created havoc on the city of Amman and its people. Tens of thousands of refugees streamed into Amman from across the Jordan River in Israel.<sup>56</sup> Relief materials arrived from SDA churches in Norway and Denmark consisting of clothing, blankets, medicine, and several tons of food stuff. One thousand blankets and a number of tents were also donated from SAWS. Working with the Jordanian International Red Cross and the Ministry of Development and Reconstruction, the church was given permission to provide as much as possible and to help distribute whatever was needed.<sup>57</sup>

Among the thousands of refugees were orphaned children devastated by the war and loss of their parents and families. Thus, the idea was born to open an orphanage or care home. The Adventist Church owned a large piece of property (33,000 square meters) close to the University of Jordan. Acquired under the leadership of

Pastor Naim Mashni in the late 1950s, this property consisted of a huge orchard of olive trees and was used as a site for several church camp meetings and retreats.<sup>58</sup>

On July 26-28, 1967, the Jordan Section approved the establishment of the orphanage.<sup>59</sup> Naim Mashni was well connected with the Jordanian government and arranged a meeting with King Hussein for Elder Wilcox and Elder Fenn from the Middle East Division. Not only was approval given by the Jordanian government, but they also took care of paving the entrance road. Subsequent plans were made to transform the dilapidated concrete chicken houses into dormitories with Mousa Azar as the first director.<sup>60</sup>

By 1970 the orphanage was completed with two dormitories and facilities for 50 boys and girls. Four hundred tents plus blankets and clothing for thousands of refugees had been donated. W. J. Clemons, Jordan Section president, welcomed 200 guests to the opening ceremony, including Her Royal Highness Princess Ferial of Jordan (who was active in the Save the Children's Foundation), the Jordanian Minister of Health, Abdelsalam Al-Majali, and the governor of Amman, Mahmood El Zaher.<sup>61</sup>

Operations continued for an estimated thirty years until about 2004/2005.<sup>62</sup> At any period during these years there was an average of 30 orphans who attended the school in Amman.<sup>63</sup> Karam Estifan was for many years the bus driver who took them to school.<sup>64</sup> In the late 1970s student missionaries came for several years from Adventist colleges and universities to serve at the Amman Adventist Secondary School and the Care Home.<sup>65</sup>

## Madaba Plains Project

In 1968 the Madaba Plains Project (MPP), directed by Siegfried H. Horn and sponsored by Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, began excavations in Jordan. It became one of the longest-lived, continuously running archaeological excavation projects in the Madaba Plains region of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and still continues today (2022).<sup>66</sup> Over the years a positive relationship developed between the participants of the MPP and the Jordanian government, and many opportunities were created to share the Adventist faith with persons on all strata of Jordanian society.

Lawrence Geraty (Ph.D. associate professor of Old Testament at Andrews University Theological Seminary, Michigan), who conducted extensive excavations for many summers, reported in the *Review and Herald*: "We've gotten acquainted with the royal family, and the reputation of the Adventist Church has been enhanced."<sup>67</sup> Byproducts of this relationship included creating opportunities for the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) to provide unique and valuable services and made it possible for Jordanian Adventist university students to take exams on days other than Sabbath.<sup>68</sup>

Geraty reported of a dig conducted in the summer of 1977 at Heshbon (located in Transjordan about twenty miles east of the Jordan): "There were many opportunities to share the SDA faith, Radio, TV, newspaper reports—even a full-length TV documentary were seen all over Jordan. As a result, many of the Heshbon Dig staff

were invited to speak or lecture in schools, service clubs, and at cultural events. Some were invited to preach at local Christian congregations and to private homes, resulting in numerous opportunities for witnessing to people.<sup>69</sup>

## ADRA

When Iraq entered Kuwait on August 2, 1990, all borders and airports were closed with the exception of land borders through Iraq and into Jordan. As thousands of foreign and Jordanian workers made their way into the country, The Jordanian government permitted NGOs, including ADRA Middle East, to operate under temporary conditions.

After three months most refugees returned to their respective countries. However, the crisis still remained with the Jordanian returnees. ADRA submitted a request to the government and were granted approval to operate on a permanent basis, under the leadership of Basim Aziz<sup>70</sup> (who was also Iraq field president for 9 of those 11 years, in addition to being the union ADRA director for the last four years of the 11, and public affairs and religious liberty union director). However, most donor countries were reluctant to help as Jordan was not considered a poor country at that time. Nevertheless, they were still able to raise around fifty thousand dollars a year.

For 11 years ADRA Jordan operated as an NGO. They implemented several projects including a free clinic, rehabilitation of handicapped people, and mother and child healthcare programs.

In 2001 ADRA ran out of money. They requested the government for a grace period of six months to a year in order to conduct fund-raising. But even though they had established a good reputation, the Ministry of Social Development denied their request, and ADRA lost its recognition.<sup>71</sup>

## The Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

In 1936 the Seventh-day Adventist Church had become established as a legal association in Trans-Jordan with its own religious court.<sup>72</sup> This was reestablished in 1961 after His Majesty King Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan granted royal assent in recommending to the Ministerial Council that the SDA church in Jordan be recognized as a religious organization. For the first time it was accepted as a national organization under Jordanian leadership, which meant that gospel ministers could pursue their work without hindrance. Marriages in Adventist churches were legal, and matters of personal nature could be decided within the church instead of being taken to outside courts.<sup>73</sup>

In early 2014 the renewal of this registration briefly came under jeopardy, but the issue was resolved by the Jordanian parliament. World church leader, Ted Wilson, made a stop in Jordan in April of 2014 to thank the king of Jordan and the prime minister for averting a possible crisis. The church had about one hundred fifty members

in the country, whose population was about 95 percent Muslim.<sup>74</sup> Today (2022) the Adventist church continues to enjoy full religious liberty in the Hashemite Kingdom, a privilege that some other Christian churches do not enjoy.<sup>75</sup>

In 2004 a Center of Influence (COI) was established in the village of Ajloun. Renting space in two shops, the COI operated an IT training center until it closed in 2007. Later when eight people were baptized in the city of Zarqa, two of these eight came from Ajloun. This couple then opened their home for Sabbath worship by tearing down a few walls in their big apartment, designating it for worship. About twenty-five people attended worship regularly every Sabbath.<sup>76</sup>

In 2005 a group of 18 people, under the leadership of Curt de Gourville, planted an English-speaking church in Amman (known as the Seventh-day Adventist Church–Amman International). In an interview he said: “Over the years Jordan has attracted a lot of foreign workers.... We thought of diversifying our outreach program to include foreigners, which at present our group is comprised of English speakers of Kenyan, Armenian, Canadian, American, Filipino, Mexican, Nigerian, and Jordanian [backgrounds].”<sup>77</sup>

In order to be self-sustaining, the East Mediterranean Field Executive Committee voted on March 19, 2006, to sell church owned land in Jabal Amman in an area called Khonaifseh. The Care Home, which was no longer functioning as such, was rented out and the proceeds were used to help the two schools with their expenses. That, along with the income generated by the shops in Al Husn and Madaba, all contributed to sustaining the ministry in Jordan.<sup>78</sup>

Over the years the Adventist schools in Jordan gained the respect of the Ministry of Education, with graduates given high posts in the government and other sectors.

In 2018 a large donation was initiated through a friend of the General Conference for the remodeling of a major addition onto the school building on Rainbow Street in Amman.<sup>79</sup> In the summer of 2019, two floors were added to the Amman Adventist National School (originally opened in 1942), under the direction of Peter Koolik, an Australian construction manager. The school, which currently (2022) has 105 students, doubled in size, and with the expansion will be able to double enrollment and offer Kindergarten in addition to the 12 grades, as well as a number of after-school programs, including stop-smoking courses, healthy lifestyle seminars, and other initiatives aimed at improving health. On January 29, 2020, world church leader, Ted Wilson, spoke at the ribbon-cutting ceremony.<sup>80</sup>

Pastor Darron Boyd, director of the East Mediterranean Region, tells that groups from the North American and South American Divisions have been helping the pastor in Madaba to remodel the church and build a play area for youth activities. He states: “We envision two levels to be added (when funding becomes available) for a cultural and tutoring center, as well as guest rooms for volunteers and tourists to stay when they come to visit Mount Nebo and the Dead Sea.”

In the city of Irbid, the church meets in the former school buildings. A Brazilian group of architects and engineers have been helping the church to envision a cultural or tutoring center at this location. In Al-Husn, 15 kilometers south of Irbid, another group from South America is helping make plans for a recreation facility and a small church to interact with the local community. Based on the model of the school on Rainbow Street in Amman, the church has a cultural center that meets after school hours. "There are a variety of activities including language classes, sport coaching, moral movie nights, tutoring, healthy cooking, and more."

In Zarqa to the northeast of Amman, a pastor is needed to serve the local church and the city of nearly two million. Currently (2022) the only indigenous pastor in Jordan drives the distance from Madaba to Zarqa to hold Sabbath afternoon services there.<sup>81</sup>

The SDA Church in Jordan has, over the years and through its ministries, established powerful ties with key people in the government, with prominent sheiks, the Islamic Moderation Forum president, Bridge Institution for Interfaith, deputy ministers, Evangelicals, and a few bishops of the Orthodox Church.<sup>82</sup>

## Church Organization and Statistics

Transjordan was first listed with the Egypto-Syrian Mission (1923-1926), and then with the Syrian Mission (1927-1929) under the Arabic Union Mission (organized in 1927) in the European Division (later in the Central European Division). In 1929 the Palestinian-Transjordanian Mission was formed and continued in the Arabic Union Mission until it became part of the Middle East Union in 1941. With the formation of the State of Israel and the Kingdom of Jordan, the Jordanian Mission or Section was organized in 1951 and continued until 1971, when it was joined with Lebanon and Syria in the East Mediterranean Field. In 2015 the East Mediterranean Field was renamed the East Mediterranean Region under which Jordan is a section.<sup>83</sup>

Through the years Transjordan or Jordan was under a number of different Divisions—the European Division (1926-1929), the Central European Division (1929-1940), attached to the General Conference under the Middle East Union (1941-1950), the Middle East Division (1951-1970). The Afro-Mideast Division (1970-1981), was again attached directly to the General Conference under the Middle East Union (1981-1995), the Trans-European Division (1995-2011), and finally attached to the General Conference under the Middle East North Africa (MENA) Union.<sup>84</sup>

At the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2021, Jordan has two churches, two companies, and a membership of 181.<sup>85</sup>

## Superintendents, Directors, and Presidents

Nils Zerne (1926-1929); Walter K. Ising (1930-1935); Dr. O. Schuberth (1936-1937); George Keough (1937-1941); E.L. Branson (1942-1943); H. G. Rutherford (1944-1945); J. S. Russell (1946); L. J. Norris (1947); R. H. Hartwell (1949-1950); R. C. Darnell (1951-1956); Chafic Srour (1957-1959); Naim Meshni (1960-1961); H. E. Robinson (1962-

1965); W. J. Clemons (1966-1969); Jon Green (1970); R. D. Pifer (1971-73); Børge Schantz (1975-1976); Manoug Nazirian (1977-1983); Gerald Karst (1983-19484; Basim Aziz (1985-1988); Samir Shahine (1988-1990); Roland Fidelia (1992-1996); Claude Lombart (1996-1999); Sven H. Jensen (1999-2000); Levon Maksoudian (2000-2011); Miroslav Didara (2012-2013); Michael Collins (2015-2016); Gilberto C. Araoujo (2017-2019); (Darron Boyd (2020-Present)).<sup>86</sup>

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