

Central South Chile Conference

SERGIO CELIS CUELLAR

Sergio Celis Cuellar

Central South Chile Conference is an administrative unit of the Seventh-day Adventist Church within the territory of the Chile Union Mission.

Central South Chile Conference (ACSCCh) is headquartered at 950 North Boulevard Ribeira, West Juan Marínez de Rosas Street, between Padre Alberto Hurtado Avenue and Arturo Prat Avenue, Zip Code: 4030000, Cívico neighborhood, community and city of Concepción, Concepción Province, Bío-Bío Region, Republic of Chile. This Conference is responsible for the territories of the VIII Biobío Region.¹

On August 20, 2015, the government of Chile presented a project for the creation of the new Ñuble Region from territories that were part of the Bío-Bío Region. The project was approved by the Senate on January 10, 2017, was signed into law on August 19 of that same year, and entered into force on September 5, 2018. As a result, in the ecclesiastical scope, ACSCCh was responsible for the preaching of the Gospel in the Bio-Bio and Ñuble regions.² In sum, the ACSCCh territory covers an area of 37,068.7 km² and has a population of 2,281,896 inhabitants of whom 19,728 are Adventists.³ That is, there is an average of approximately one Adventist per 116 inhabitants. These members are distributed among 175 congregations (119 churches and 56 groups),⁴ which are organized and distributed in 32 missionary districts within the regions of Arauco, Ñuble, Concepción, and Bío-Bío.⁵

In the educational area, ACSCCh, through Mario Veloso Oses Foundation (FEMVO), serves 7,452 students in 14 school units.⁶ The units are: Quirao Adventist Academy (EAQ), located at km 50 on the road to Quirihue, Ninhue community, Itata province, Ñuble Region, established in 1953, this institution offers elementary education and has 78 students enrolled; Los Ángeles Adventist Academy (EALA), located at 2710 Sor Vicenta avenue, community and city of Los Ángeles, Biobío Region, established in 1952, which currently has 421 students in preschool and elementary school; Chillán Adventist Academy (CADECH), located at 557 Bulnes, community and city of Chillán, Ñuble Region, established in 1949, which currently has 634 students in elementary school; Chile Adventist University Academy (CACH), located at Las Mariposas Farm at km 12 on the road to Tanilvoro, Chillán, Ñuble, established in 1958, which currently has 610 students in middle and high school; and Los Ángeles Adventist Elementary School (CEALA), located at km 16 on the road to Antuco, El Álamo Sector, community and city of Los Ángeles, Biobío Region; established in 1978, which has 1,625 students in preschool and elementary school.⁷

In addition to these units, FEMVO also supervises: Lota Adventist Academy (CAL), located at 154 Carlos Cousiño Avenue, Lota Alto Sector, community and city of Lota, Concepción Province, Biobío Region, established in 1978, which currently has 602 students from preschool to high school; Talcahuano Central Adventist Academy (CATCE), located at 1165 Colón Avenue, community and city of Talcahuano, Concepción Province, Biobío Region, established in 1958, which has 575 students from preschool to high school; Concepción Adventist Academy (CADECM), located at 240 Freire, community and city of Concepción, Biobío Region, established in 1942, which serves 305 students in middle and high school; Concepción Adventist Elementary School (CADECB), located at 780 Angol, Concepción, Biobío, established in 1942, which serves 338 students in elementary school; Talcahuano Adventist Academy (CADET), located at 491 Monseñor Alarcón, Vega de Perales Sector, Talcahuano, Biobío, established in 2005, which has 877 students from preschool to high school; Chillan Adventist Nursery School (PACH), located at 575 Rosas, Chillán, Biobío Region, established in 2003, which has 139 students in preschool and elementary school; Las Mariposas Adventist Academy (EADMA), located at Las Mariposas Farm, km 12, on the road to Tanilvoro, Chillán, established in 1922, which has 380 students from preschool to high school; Concepción Adventist Nursery School (PAC), located at 1166 Martínez Rozas, Concepción, Biobío, established in 1942, with 75 preschool students; and finally, Hualpén Adventist Academy (CADHU), located at 415 Curanilahue Avenue, Lan C sector, community and city of Hualpén, Concepción, Biobío, established in 1982, with 793 elementary school students.⁸

In the area of evangelization through the media, ACSCh has 7 radio stations, 2 open television channels, and 17 cable channels. Thus, the Conference seeks to reach the largest number of people in their own homes and workplaces, in all regions of the country, through all media⁹ such as radio, television, and the Internet.

In relation to the number of people serving the Church and the community, ACSCh has a total of 1,051 employees, of whom 34 are ordained and 10 are licensed pastors, 24 have a missionary credential, and 15 have a missionary license.¹⁰

The Origin of the SDA Work in the Conference Territory

The first Adventists who arrived in 1885, in Chile, settled in the Traiguén area which belonged to Araucanía (current IX Region). The first Adventist canvassers to arrive in the city of Valparaíso, in 1894, were Clair A. Nowlen, Frederick W. Bishop, and Thomas H. Davis. They initially worked in the northern and central regions of the country, so the cities of Concepción, Chillán and Los Ángeles were later influenced by Adventism in this first stage. Yet, the territory was not neglected by these pioneers. In 1896, almost two years after their arrival in Chile, it was recorded that the canvassers Davis and Bishop worked in the Concepción area with satisfactory results although amid warnings from Protestant ministers of other denominations.¹¹

Soon, Davis and Bishop were helped in their work by other volunteers. Enrique Balada, who had been converted by Bishop's work in Santiago,¹² worked in the city of Los Ángeles. Among the first converts in that city, two

people stood out--a Danish electrician named Ottensen, and Petronila Neumann, who married Bishop in 1897. Pastor Granville H. Baber, the first Adventist pastor sent to the emerging Chile Mission (currently the Chile Union Mission), during his first tour in southern Chile, visited Los Ángeles congregation in early February 1897 where four people were baptized. Days later, in the city of Concepción, a lady who had received the message in Valparaíso was also baptized. In the city of Mulchén, one of the first converts was José Luis Escobar, who would be part of the pioneer advance of the Adventist message in Peru in 1898.¹³

After their marriage, Bishop settled in Los Ángeles where he continued to work for the advancement of the Church. In 1901, he reported the construction of the first chapel in that city. In July 1902, Pastor H. F. Ketring, president of the West Coast Mission, headquartered in Chile during a trip to the south of this country in the town of Chillán, went to the home of sister Rojas, and then he went to the city of Los Ángeles to Brother Bishop's house. By that time, Bishop had canvassed in areas such as Punta de Arenas and Tierra del Fuego.¹⁴ Similarly, in 1909, there were canvassers working in the cities of Concepción, Coronel, and Cañete in addition to other southern cities. In that year, Pastor Francisco Westphal, president of the Conference, organized the church in Cañete, where years before someone who had heard the message in Antofagasta had settled. This church was organized at the meetings of the Chile Conference, in Gorbea, in April 1910.¹⁵

In turn, the Concepción church was organized by the Chile Conference at the Congress held in Pitrufquén in March 1913. The temple was located at 983 Las Heras Street. Years later, in 1916, it was reported that Víctor Thomann found himself working in Tomás, where there were already some interested people in the Adventist message.¹⁶ On the other hand, the establishment of the ecclesiastical work in what is now the Ñuble Region was greatly strengthened in 1922 with the transfer of the Chilean Adventist School from Púa, Araucanía Region, to the Las Mariposas farm, which was 12 kilometers from Chillán. Thus, in May of that year, a church was organized in that city, and after much effort, two decades later, Austral Union Conference (currently the Argentina Union Conference) Board of Directors, approved the purchase of land and the construction of the first church in the city.¹⁷

The missionary work and spirit of the brethren and their leaders continued to bear fruit. In 1932, the organization of more congregations in the cities of Concepción, Chillán, Los Ángeles, Talcahuano, and Los Sauces was reported.¹⁸ And just as churches were opened to evangelize more effectively, in the year of 1933, a church school was opened in Talcahuano to offer Christian education to the local community.¹⁹ It is likely that this school was the second in the territory following the one that already operated in Chile Adventist Academy in Chillán. In this context, the need to organize a new administrative unit arose to help the southern regions in the vast Chilean territory.

The Conference Organizational History

The ACSCh is the result of a process that began long before its current organization. The earliest movement dates back to 1950 when the Chile Conference, under the jurisdiction of Austral Union Conference, was divided during the Congress held in Porvenir church, Santiago, from March 14 to 19. That moment marked the beginning of South Chile Conference (ASCh), whose office was established at 855 General Lagos Street in the city of Temuco. Its missionary territory covered from San Carlos in the north to the extreme south of Chile, and it had a population of 2,000,000 inhabitants, 22 churches, and 2,275 members. That is, at the time of ASCh organization, there was about one Adventist per 879 inhabitants in the region. At this Congress, Pastor Benjamín Bustos Flores was appointed as president and Guillermo Emmenegger as secretary-treasurer.²⁰ Along with them, more than seven ordained pastors and four licensed pastors would lead the work. Until the end of 1950, as a result of joint efforts between the leaders and the brethren, 137 people joined the Seventh-day Adventist church membership through baptism.²¹

In March of the following year, in Valparaíso, the second largest city in Chile, Pastor Walter Schubert, president of the DSA, led a series of evangelistic meetings. Representatives from many fields of the Austral Union Conference were sent to participate in these meetings. Pastor F. Jiménez was the representative from South Chile Conference.²² As the Church grew, new projects were developed. For example, in 1960, the Austral Union Conference organized the Youth Congress in which 1,500 people participated. Also present²³ were the secretary of Inca Union Mission, Wayne Griffith; Pastor Donald Sandstrom, president of North Coast Mission (Brazil) linked to North Brazil Union Mission; Henry Feyerabend, secretary of Santa Catarina Mission of South Brazil Union Conference; and John Youngberg, secretary of South Chile Conference.

Meanwhile, with the constant advancement of Adventist missionary work, the South American Division (DSA) promoted a reorganization of the missionary fields in Chile. Thus, in 1966, it founded Chile Union Mission (UCh) with three fields: South Chile Conference, Central Chile Conference, and North Chile Mission²⁴. The first president of the Union was Pastor D. K. Sullivan. Therefore, pastors A. E. Collins and D. D. Dennis continued to work in the ASCh as president and secretary-treasurer, respectively. Until the end of that year, South Chile Conference had 30 churches and 5,113 members.²⁵

With the dynamics of the growing Adventist work of evangelization in Chile, new Councils were held. From January 2 to 5, 1975, Chile Union Mission organized the Quadrennial Session at Chile Academy. Many aspects of the progress of the evangelistic work were discussed. Highlights included the debate on justification and sanctification as well as the report of the baptism of 3,074 people. Furthermore, it was agreed that pastors Leopoldo Zambra and Juan A. Calisto from North Chile Conference and South Chile Conference, respectively, should be ordained.²⁶

In order to advance the preaching of the Gospel, in March 1978, the first elementary school, in addition to Chile Adventist Academy, started to operate in Chillán. The South Chile Adventist Academy (currently CEALA) was located in El Álamo Farm, 16 km away from the city of Los Ángeles.²⁷ Back then, it was the only high school with

a boarding school system in the country. Subsequently, Concepción Adventist Academy began offering high school courses in 1982.²⁸ The Adventist Church grew slowly but steadily during the first decades after its establishment in southern Chile.

A new millennium was beginning, and with it, new changes became necessary. At the UCh Board of Directors, which took place in November 2000, a territorial restructuring of South Chile Conference was proposed, which at the time had 165 churches and 99 groups, organized in 37 pastoral districts,²⁹ in which there were 38,980 members in a population of 4,152,603 people.³⁰ That is, there was about one Adventist per 107 inhabitants in its territory. At that same meeting, in accordance with the SAD guidelines, it was decided that after the reorganization, ASCh would have 28 pastoral districts, 130 churches, 76 groups, and 32,757 members.³¹ Therefore as of 2002, the South Conference territory was limited to the Bío-Bío and Araucanía regions once that, with the creation of Austral Chile Mission (MACH), this institution assumed the leadership of the churches in the southernmost part of ASCh former territory.³²

In 2010, Chilean Union Mission requested the South American Division to restructure ASCh and MACH. In order to balance its budgets and membership, the Araucanía Region would become the territory of MACH. As for ASCh, the proposal also included changes to their headquarters and name.³³ Thus, in the new organizational structure, South Conference had 100 organized churches, 34 groups, and 23,304 members organized in 23 pastoral districts.³⁴

This reconfiguration started in August 2010 with the establishment of temporary offices in the church of Higuera, located at 189 Gabriela Mistral Street, Talcahuano. Members of the local church offered the structure of their new temple, which was under construction, for the operation of the Conference. Thus, as of 2011, South Chile Conference changed its name to Central South Chile Conference (ACSCCh) and was headquartered in Concepción. The administration of the new Conference was formed by Milton Alaña as president, Luis Jerez as secretary, and Ricardo Cortez as treasurer.³⁵

With the advancement of the preaching work, a greater need for leadership training was perceived. Thus, on April 6 and 7, 2013, the training session for ACSCCh leaders took place at Hualpén Adventist Church. Leaders of Central South Chile Conference and Chile Union Mission were present. The meeting was attended by more than 500 people, including members and church officials who left the meeting more prepared to better serve in the work of God.³⁶ For ACSCCh, the Small Groups³⁷ are part of the life of the Church in the VIII region of Chile. For example, in 2016, thanks to the meetings held between the brethren, there was a strong growth in the amount of people and homes involved which fostered membership spiritual strengthening and a constant desire to preach about the return of Jesus.

In addition to the activities carried out in the Small Groups, another project that caught the attention of the population in Concepción was the Health Fair. This activity was organized by Adventist youth in partnership with Los Alamos Wellness Center (a natural life center). With the participation of students and health professionals,

the principles of healthy living and the eight natural remedies were presented to the population as a means of obtaining health.³⁸

In the midst of many missionary actions, in 2016, ACSCh's head office moved to its current headquarters in the city of Concepción, which is behind the new central temple of the city at 950 North Boulevard Rivera. Among the departments and ministries that ACSCh administers from its new headquarters is the Youth ministry. On March 18, 2017, this ministry celebrated Global Youth Day – an event promoted by the General Conference Youth Department – and mobilized more than 80 youth in the city of Concepción with the blood donation project called “Vida por Vidas” [Life for Lives]. In addition to blood donation, the Conference promoted health fairs, recreational activities, and handing out Christian literature to passers-by.³⁹

Evangelistic actions like these have characterized the many missionary efforts that have been carried out during the almost 10 years of ACSCh operation in its current configuration. The commitment and fidelity of the leaders and members of that region keep bearing witness to their purpose to continue dedicating all possible efforts and resources so that more and more people may get to know the Everlasting Gospel.

Chronology of Administrative Leaders⁴⁰

Presidents: Benjamín Bustos (1951-1953); Orval R. Scully (1954-1959); Carlos Ayala (1960-1963); A. E. Collins (1964-1968); Augusto Bacigalupi (1969-1979); Siegfried Mayr (1980-1981); Eliel Almonte (1982-1985); Valentín Concha (1987-1991); Hijinio Monardes (1992-1995); Guido Quinteros (1996-2001); Octavio Belmar (2002); Gavino Curiqueo (2003-2005); Samuel Concha (2006-2009); Milton Alaña (2010-2018); Aldo Delgado (2019-Present).

Secretaries: G. E. Emmenegger (1951-1954); José Schmied (1955); Belarmino Torres (1956-1959); Juan Zevallos (1960-1961); Mariano Renedo (1962-1963); D. D. Dennis (1964-1966); Emilio Wandersleben (1967-1970); Valentín Concha (1971-1974); Augusto Wandersleben (1975-1976); Siegfried Mayr (1977-1978); Raúl Pérez (1979-1985); Manuel Gutiérrez (1986-1991); Gavino Curiqueo (1992-1994); Octavio Belmar (1995-2000); Josué Chandia (2001); Raúl Larrondo (2002); Víctor Tabilo (2003-2006); John Carreño (2007-2010); Luis Jerez (2011-2013); Israel Jaramillo (2014-2015); Aldo Delgado (2016-2018); Juan Elías Gatica (2019-Present).

Treasurers: G. E. Emmenegger (1951-1954); José Schmied (1955); Belarmino Torres (1956-1959); Juan Zevallos (1960-1961); Mariano Renedo (1962-1963); D. D. Dennis (1964-1966); Emilio Wandersleben (1967-1970); Valentín Concha (1971-1974); Augusto Wandersleben (1975); Ariel Vera (1976-1978); Raúl Pérez (1979-1986); Juan Fernandes (1987-1990); Valentín Concha (1991-1994); Rene Pérez (1995-1997); Moisés Figueroa (1998-2006); Herzon Castillo (2007-2008); Guillermo Acosta (2009); Ricardo Cortes (2010-2014); Alexis Pardo (2014-2018); Ademar Ontiveros (2019-Present).⁴¹

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