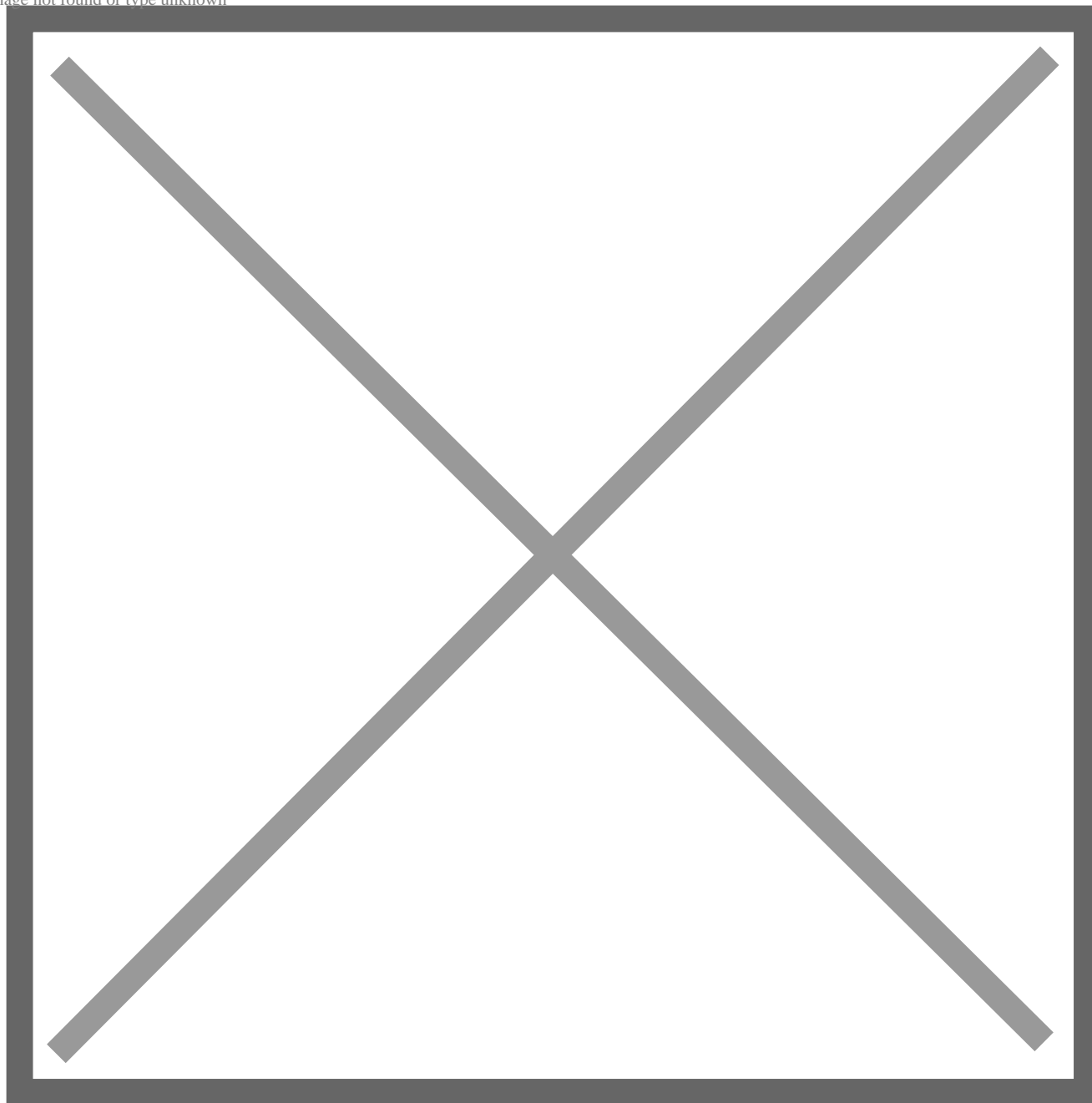


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North Costa Rica Mission

CARLOS ANTONIO FRES FUENTES

Carlos Antonio Fres Fuentes, M.A. in pastoral theology, has served as district pastor in El Salvador, Honduras and Costa Rica for 23 years. He has also served as field secretary and director of the departments of Personal Ministries, Sabbath School, Spirit of Prophecy and Family Life. He is currently a D. Min. candidate at Inter-American Adventist Theological Seminary. He is married to Ivonne Miranda Rodríguez and they have three daughters.

Costa Rica is located in Central America. It borders on the north with Nicaragua, the south with Panama, the east and west with the Atlantic and Pacific oceans respectively. Its Atlantic coast measures 255 km, while the Pacific coast extends 1,103 km. Both coasts enjoy an abundance of first-class beaches and lush vegetation. Costa Rica enjoys

spring weather throughout the year with the average temperature being 72°F (22°C) in the Central Valley. Coastal and beach temperatures range from 70-90°F (21-32°C). In this country, according to the Holdrieschl scale there are more than 12 life zones as a result of an abundance of microclimates. This abundance of microclimates has produced both a wealth of fauna and flora making them one of the richest on the planet. The rivers, beaches in both oceans, the land, and the climate allow it to produce twelve months of the year. It is considered a country of eternal spring because of its greenery and its climate.¹

Although Costa Rica is a small country, it is known for its level of education and for its specialization. There are no political or social concerns that keep the country unstable. The Costa Rican people are characterized by their legendary cordiality and friendly nature. The vast majority of the population descends from Spanish and European colonizers.²

The territory of the North Costa Rica Mission includes the provinces of Alajuela, Heredia, Guanacaste and the northern part of the province of Puntarenas.³ According to the statistical report of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, as of June 30, 2018 the North Costa Rica Mission had 75 organized churches, and 27,961 church members in a population of 1,769,561 distributed in the four provinces that comprise its territory.⁴ Currently, the mission has a membership of 12,378 active members, 78 organized churches, 29 groups, and 23 pastors⁵

Origins of Church in Costa Rica

Pastor, colporteur and missionary doctor, Frank Hutchins and his wife Cora, arrived from the United States to the Caribbean Costa Rican coast to provide dental care and preach the Adventist message. This was the first entry of the Adventist message to Costa Rica. As a result of their missionary effort, a group of brothers began to gather near Puerto Limón. A craftsman by the name of Wright along with other brothers were baptized by Pastor Hutchins as the first converts to the Adventist message.⁶ After the death of the tireless Pastor Hutchins in 1902, I. G. Knight and his wife continued with the work. They moved to Puerto Limón in 1905, to hold revival meetings for three months uninterruptedly.⁷

Events Leading to Organization of the Mission

The evangelistic growth was of such magnitude that twenty-three years later in 1928, Costa Rica became established as a mission with four churches and 148 members. Between 1931 and 1944, evangelization extended to San José and other provinces. According to the 1944 Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook, the Costa Rican Mission already had 16 churches and 657 members by this date. Most of the members lived on the Caribbean coast and there was only one church organized in San José.⁸ The evangelistic dynamics of the mission continued and by 1997, there were 16 districts, each with an average of three to ten congregations. By 2002, the Caribbean area had 30 organized churches, and 26 groups.⁹

Organization of the North Costa Rica Mission

In the records of the former Central American Union of June 19, 2001, is the following statement: "Pass the request of the Costa Rica Mission to the Inter-American Division to be authorized to divide the field into three regions: North Region: Heredia, Alajuela, Puntarenas, and Guanacaste; South Central Region: San José, Cartago, and South Pacific; and Caribbean Region: Turrialba and Limón."¹⁰ In subsection 2001-76, the vote of the division of the three regions is recorded effective as of July 1, 2001.

During 2001-2007, the North Region and the North Costa Rica Mission operated in the house of a non-Adventist man, who gladly rented it. On January 16, 2007, the administration along with the board of directors voted to request UNADECA to grant a house in which to locate the offices of the mission for the period of one year extendable, requesting that no rent be charged during the period that the mission occupied the house.

In 2008, Mr. Cecilio Douglas McDonald donated a property located in Las Américas, with the only condition being that the church could take possession, only until Mrs. Dora Casanova Harris died. However, Mrs. Harris traveled to Panama and handed over the property to the North Costa Rica Mission. The administration of that time, Pastor Guenther García and Mr. José Smith sent financial compensation for a period of time to Mrs. Harris, in gratitude. After Ms. Harris passed away, the property was transferred to the name of the mission.¹¹

The North Costa Rica Mission was organized at a congress on December 8, 2003 with 16,483 members, 20 districts, and 20 pastors. The address is 1.6 km. Norte de la Corte Suprema de Justicia, Residencial Las Américas, La Ceiba, Alajuela; Costa Rica.¹²

Schools

The North Costa Rica Mission operates three educational institutions. The Monteverde Adventist Educational Center (1991) has six employees and 43 students,¹³ the Ebenezer Adventist Educational Center in the city of Liberia (1998), has seven employees and 62 students,¹⁴ and the Emanuel Adventist Educational Center in the city of Guayabo (1999), has nine employees and 45 students.¹⁵

The origins of Central American Adventist University (UNADECA), date back to 1927, but it was recognized by the government of Costa Rica in 1987. Currently it has 45 employees and 425 students.¹⁶ On the campus of UNADECA is the Autumn Miller School (1950) with 364 students and 40 employees,¹⁷ and Central American Adventist University Academy with 252 students and 29 employees.

Camp

Orotina Camp: During the administration of Pastor Francisco Arroyo, a property in Orotina of 7,353 m² was identified and in 1974 it was purchased. In 2001, during the administration of Pastor Eugenio Vallejo, Luis Rubio was appointed as administrator and he proposed a new design for the camp. This new plan projected a shift toward the concept of a recreational center and a nearby camp that allowed greater access for the community and a level of economic self-sustainability.¹⁸

Industries

In 1954, the Vocational College of Central America (COVAC) was directed by Pastor Manuel Carballal of Cuban origin, and Pastor Francisco Arroyo of Costa Rican origin who worked as a manager. During their management a small bakery was started that produced and distributed the bread in a very traditional way. In 1997 the name was changed to CETEBEDI S.A.¹⁹

Radio Station

The North Costa Rica Mission shares, with other Adventist institutions, the administration of Radio Lira (1983).²⁰

Presidents

Argueta Transit (2001-2006); Guenther García (2007-2008); Eugenio Vallejo (2009-2012); and Milton Castillo (2013-).

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