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South Central American Union Mission

RICARDO MARÍN SALAS

Ricardo Marin Salas, M.A. in pastoral ministry (Seminar on Theological Studies of Inter-America – SETAI), B.A. in theology (Universidad Nicaragua), has served as a district pastor in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Costa Rica and also as a departmental director in those countries. In 2011 he was appointed as a departmental director of South Central American Union Mission. Since December 2014 he has served as executive secretary in South Central American Union Mission.

The South Central American Union Mission is located in Urbanization Montenegro Stage 3 of the central district of Alajuela, Costa Rica, and it currently has 528 churches, 300 groups or companies, a membership in May 2019 of 121,440 members, and 122 pastors attending 114 districts in Costa Rica and Nicaragua.¹

There are currently 15 office workers in the union, 378 teachers, 29 primary schools, and 11 secondary schools. Institutions include HANIC Hospital, a youth camp, a food company (CETEDEDI), and the Adventist University of Central America (UNADECA).

Origins of the South Central American Union

In 1926 the work that was just beginning in the city of San José, Costa Rica, was strengthened with the establishment of the Central American Union. Until then, the countries that make up the union, from Guatemala to Panama, belonged to the Aztec Union. Due to the increase in the work in Central America, they separated to form a new union. The headquarters of the Central American Union was established in a small building in the Amón neighborhood, 100 meters north of what is now known as the Yellow House (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship). The first president of the union was Pastor W. E. Baxter and the first secretary-treasurer was Pastor A. P. Christiansen of Norway.²

After several years the Central American Union moved to downtown San José, 100 meters east of the post office on Third Avenue. The union, mission, church, and pastors' houses were located together. As the church in Costa Rica grew, property was purchased near the original headquarters, and the union and mission offices were moved, leaving the church and the housing for pastors in their original location.³

The church continued to grow and the time came when the mission separated completely from the union. The union administration wanted a location more withdrawn from the city center and property was purchased in Barrio Escalante, San José. There the headquarters of the Central American Union stayed until 1964 when it was transferred to Guatemala because of the eruption of the Irazú Volcano, which seemed to never finish throwing its ashes throughout the Central Valley.⁴ The union remained in Guatemala City, Zone 2, until new offices were built and moved into in Zone 15 in 1966.

Events that Led to the Organization of the Current Union

In 1981 a decision was made to move the union headquarters to Alajuela, Costa Rica, and this became official in August 1982. The officers were Pastor Arístides González (president), Pastor Alfredo García Marengo (secretary), and José Lizardo Campos (treasurer). It was felt that the new location would have more political and social stability.⁵

The office was first located on Calle 4 between Avenues 4 and 6, 150 meters south of the Llobet warehouse in Alajuela, Costa Rica. It was moved to a new building on November 12, 1984, in the Urbanization Montenegro, stage 3 of the city of Alajuela, Costa Rica, under the presidency of Pastor George Brown of the Inter-American Division (IAD) and Pastor Arístides González, president of the Central American Union.⁶

In 2003 the General Conference and the Inter-American Division agreed to divide the union into three unions, as follows:

North Central American Union Mission (Guatemala and Belize)

Mid-Central American Union Mission (El Salvador and Honduras)

South Central American Union Conference (Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama)

In July 2003 the South Central American Union was officially organized. As part of the union's strategic plan, by vote 002-2013 on May 16, 2013, the Inter-American Division was asked to split this union so that the local fields in Panama would form a separate union.⁷

Thus, the Inter-American Division, at its midyear meeting in June 2014, under the leadership of Pastor Israel Leito, unanimously voted to raise the request to study the territorial readjustment of the South Central American Union Conference.⁸

In harmony with organizational regulations, an evaluation commission appointed by the General Conference was composed of: Pastor Armando Miranda (GC vice president) as chair, Pastor Agustín Galicia (GC associate secretary) as secretary, Roy Ryan (GC associate treasurer), Pastor Erton Kholer (president, South American Division), Dr. Alexander Bryant (executive secretary, NAD), Pastor Israel Leito (president, IAD), Pastor Elie Henry (executive secretary, IAD), Pastor Filiberto Verduzco (treasurer, IAD), Pastor Wilfredo Ruiz (SCAU president), Pastor Earnal Scott (SCAU executive secretary), and Silas Martínez (SCAU treasurer).⁹

This commission was approved in Panama on August 25 and 26, 2014, and on August 27 in Costa Rica.¹⁰ They proceeded to make the review with great care, seriousness, and dedication.

The commission unanimously decided to take the recommendation to the Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee. The dissolution of the South Central American Union and the organization of the South Central American Union Mission (based in Alajuela, Costa Rica) and the Panama Union Mission (based in Panama City) was voted on October 15, 2014. This left the South Central American Union Mission with three fields in Cost Rica and three fields in Nicaragua.¹¹

On December 15, 2015, in Alajuela, Costa Rica, Pastor Wilfredo Ruiz proposed in congress session the dissolution of the South Central American Union Conference and the formation of the two new unions. The proposal was approved that day and was effective immediately. Pastor Wilfredo Ruiz was chosen as president of the South Central American Union Mission, the secretary was Pastor Ricardo Marín Salas, and the treasurer was Silas Martínez Ramírez. Field presidents were appointed, as follows: North Costa Rica Mission, Pastor Milton Castillo; Caribbean Costa Rica Mission, Pastor Miguel Adonia; South-Central Costa Rica Conference, Pastor Olmedo Martínez; Central Nicaragua Mission, Pastor José Antonio Vargas Palacios; Northwestern Nicaragua Mission, Pastor Evaristo García; and South Atlantic Nicaragua Mission, Pastor Juan Bosco Vanega.¹²

Humanitarian Programs and Initiatives

The South Central American Union, through its local fields, supports people who have experienced material loss due to natural disasters, educational projects, and, in some cases, provides charitable assistance.

Relationship of the Union to the Inter-American Division

The South Central American Union is affiliated with the global Seventh-day Adventist Church and is located in the territory of the Inter-American Division of Seventh-day Adventists. The union shall continue the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in harmony with the doctrines, programs, and initiatives adopted and approved by the world Church in its quinquennial sessions.¹³

Plans to Fulfill the Mission

Mission Statement

“Under the power and direction of the Holy Spirit, prepare Nicaragua and Costa Rica for the soon Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Vision Statement

“For the glory of God, each member of the body of Christ becomes a disciple, enjoying a growing spiritual experience, trained and committed to the evangelizing mission, planting new churches, establishing a solid health and education program, for the formation of two new Unions.”

Values

Love

Consecration

Integrity

Loyalty

Unity

Respect

Commitment

Responsibility

Service

Work

Believing that we exist for the fulfillment of the mission, we believe that to do so we must:

1.

Be a committed ministerial body with God's vision for the fulfillment of the mission.

2. Have a practical school for Christian workers in each church and district, and volunteers who are trained to reach others publicly and personally.
3. Establish new educational institutions where we make our philosophy of character formation for eternity known.
4. Maintain a growing comprehensive preventive and curative health system to fully restore the image of God in people.
5. Develop a community involvement plan which addresses in a comprehensive way the needs that are discovered.
6. Propose a permanent small group plan, as the basis of the missionary effort to penetrate all the neighborhoods of the union, especially those without an Adventist presence.
7. Organize the Nicaraguan Union.

Presidents of the Union

William Baxter (1930-1936), Pastor Cragger (1937-1941), N. H. Kinzer (1942-1946), J. L. Brown (1946-1948), L. V. Larson (1949-1953), C. G. Gordon (1954-1957), Fernon Retzer (1958-1960), Lloyd L. Reile (1961-1964), Glenn E. Maxson (1965-1973), Carlos Aeschlimann (1973), Alfredo Aeschlimann (1973-1974), Robert S. Folkenberg (1975-1979), Aristides González (1980-1993), Juan O. Perla (1994-2000), Pablo Perla (2000-2003), Luis González (2003-2005), Wilfredo Ruiz (2006-2019).

Secretaries of the Union

Arthur Christiansen (1935-1937), F. I. Mohr (1938-1941), H. L. Higgins (1941-1943), H. L. Nielsen (1943-1944), D. A. Cone (1945-1948), L. A. Tucker (1949-1952), K. W. Whitney (1953-1958), W. V. Wiist (1958-1964), D. P. Huey (1964-1966), A. L. Edeburn (1966-1970), T. G. Sample (1971-1972), W. H. Waller (1973-1974), Robert S. Folkenberg (1974-1975), Aristides González (1975-1979), Samuel Leonor (1980), José Lizardo (1981), Alfredo García Marenko (1981-1986), Juan O. Perla (1987-1993), Orville Pottinger (1994-1995), Emilio De León (1996), Jorge Reid (1996-2000), Marlon C. Moodie (2001-2008), Guenther García (2009-2010), Earnal Scott (2011-2014), Ricardo Marín (2015-2019).

Treasurers of the Union

Arthur Christiansen (1935-1937), F. I. Mohr (1938-1941), H. L. Higgins (1941-1943), H. L. Nielsen (1943-1944), D. A. Cone (1945-1948), L. A. Tucker (1949-1952), K. W. Whitney (1953-1958), W. V. Wiist (1958-1964), D. P. Huey (1964-1966), A. L. Edeburn (1966-1970), T. G. Sample (1971-1972), W. H. Waller (1973), Toto Weiss (1974-1975), Juan de Armas (1975-1976), Samuel Leonor (1977-1980), José R. Lizardo (1981-1983), Iszo O. Zelaya (1984-1990), Orville Pottinger (1990-1996), Luis O. Palacios (1996-2003), Silas Martínez (2004-2019).

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NOTES

1. Statistic Report of South Central American Union, 2019, South Central American Union records, Etapa No., Alajuela, Costa Rica.?
2. Israel Ramírez, "*Historia de la iglesia Adventista en Costa Rica*," (CADES, 1986), 3.?
3. Ibid., 4.?
4. Ibid.?
5. Minutes establishing the Ordinary General Assembly of the Association of Central American Union of Seventh-day Adventists, December 22, 1982, 2.?
6. Arroyo, Francisco. "*Reseña histórica de la Unión Centroamericana desde 1940*," Alajuela, Costa Rica, April 14, 1983, 1.?
7. Secretary Official Files, South Central American Union, 2013.?
8. Ibid., 2014.?
9. Ibid.?
10. South Central American Union Board, vote no. 005-2014, December 15, 2014.?
11. Ibid.?
12. Ibid.
13. Inter-American Division of Seventh-day Adventists. "Operating Regulations 2018-2019," 208.?

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