

Armenian Mission

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Armenian Field is part of the Euro-Asia Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Armenian Field was organized in 2001, and reorganized in 2020. Its headquarters is located in Yerevan, Armenia¹

Territory: Republic of Armenia.

Statistics (June 30, 2021): Churches, 19; membership, 820; population, 2,965,000²

Significant Dates

2001 – Organization of Armenian Field.

2008 - Armenian Mission reorganized and incorporated into Trans-Caucasus Union Mission (CaUM).

2016 - Armenian Field was reorganized and its constituent churches incorporated into Trans-Caucasus Union of Churches.

2020-present – Reorganization and activities of Armenian Field as a mission field directly attached to the Euro-Asia Division.

History of Adventism in Armenia

Armenia embraced Christianity as far back as A.D. 34. When in 301 Christianity was declared the state religion, Armenia was the first country to make this step. By the beginning of the 19th century, Eastern Armenia was a part of the Russian Empire, which later played a role in the spread of Adventism in Armenia.³

The Adventist message came to Armenia from different sources in the late 19th century. Adventism was adopted by many Russian Molokans in the village of Bazarchay (now, Ghoraik) in southern Armenia, and ethnic Armenians residing in the village of Nizhniy Khatunarkh (now, Gai), not far from the cities Echmiadzin and Yerevan.

Thanks to the efforts of Adventist pioneers, including Theophilus A. Babienko, V.L. Zhukov, and I.K. Kosmynin, the Three Angels' Messages were proclaimed and Adventist tracts from Germany were distributed in Armenia. In 1896 about 100 people called themselves Adventists in the village of Bazarchay.

In 1904 Dr. Vahan Pampayan moved from America to Transcaucasia with his family. He translated and printed Adventist tracts and did much missionary work, resulting in new members joining the Adventist Church.

In 1909 Dr. Pampayan left due to persecution. Gukas Gassaryan, baptized thanks to Dr. Pampayan's work, replaced him as a Bible worker.

In the spring of 1908, when Heinrich Löbsack, a representative of the Caucasus Conference, visited Armenia, particularly the village of Bazarchay, an Adventist congregation of 31 members was established. Four years later, the Adventists in Bazarchay dedicated their house of prayer.

Beginning in 1907 Armenia was a part of the Caucasus Conference that embraced the territory of North Caucasus and Transcaucasia. At the beginning of 1914, there were 179 church members in Bazarchay and three in Nizhniy Khatunarkh.

In the early years of Soviet power, denominational work in Transcaucasia was headed by Ya. M. Pakhla and then by N. I. Klimenko and Aleksey G. Gallajev.

In addition to the Adventist presence in Bazarchay and Nizhniy Khatunarkh, one more Adventist congregation, consisting of 14 members, was organized in Yerevan on October 25, 1925.

In the 1930s and during World War II church activities in Armenia, as in the entire USSR, were reduced to a minimum due to unceasing government repression and interdictions. Worship services in highly depleted Armenian congregations only began to resume in 1946.

In the summer of 1956, worshippers started to meet at Sahak Galustyan's house, located at the fringe of the city of Yerevan. In the spring of 1957, Pastors P.A. Matsanov and P.S. Kulakov visited Yerevan.

The dissolution of the All-Union Council of Seventh-day Adventists in 1960 heavily impacted the Church's unity. The local churches that became autonomous experienced a split. The consequences of the split were overcome only twenty years later when the two congregations in Yerevan (13 and 132 members, respectively) merged.

Adventist pastors who served in Armenia in the 1970 and 1980s included such notable figures as I.M. Dreiling, D.P. Kulakov, V.S. Begas, and V. Ya. Predolyak.

Organizational History

In 1994 local churches in Armenia became part of the Transcaucasian Mission.

Thanks to the efforts of a Bible worker, and then Pastor V.V. Khachatryan, four churches and several companies were organized in the south of Armenia after 1995.

In November 2001 delegates to the constituency meeting of North Caucasus Conference held in the city of Rostov-on-Don voted to organize the Caucasus Union Mission, which also included Armenian Mission. By the

end of 2001 the Armenian Mission comprised 14 local churches, with 830 members and six pastors.

On December 22, 2004, the Spiritual Center of the Armenian Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church was dedicated in Yerevan.

In October 2008 the Caucasus Union Mission was reorganized into two union missions: the Caucasus Union Mission proper and the Trans-Caucasus Union Mission, the latter comprising the territories of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.

In 2016 the mission was reorganized into the Trans-Caucasus Union of Churches, which also included local churches in Armenia. However, the union of churches was dissolved in 2020, and the Armenian Mission is now directly attached to the Euro-Asia Division.

Presidents

Vigen Khachatryan (2001-2009); Douglas T. Hardt (2009-2011); Arthur Galstyan (2011-2015); Gagik Badalyan (2020-present).⁴

SOURCES

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Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook, 2001-2020. <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/>.

Yunak, Dmitry O. "Armenia." *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*, February 11, 2021. Accessed November 22, 2022. <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=AD50&highlight=Armenia>

Yunak, D. O. *Istoriya Tserkvi Adventistov Sed'mogo Dnia v Rossii (1886-2000) (v dvukh tomakh)*. Zaokskiy: Istochnik Zhizni, 2002.

NOTES

1. Translated from Russian by Marina Stanovkina.

2. "Armenian Field," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (2022), <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/entity?EntityID=20741>.

3. Unless stated otherwise, the information in this article comes from Dmitry O. Yunak, "Armenia," *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*, February 11, 2021, accessed November 22, 2022, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=AD50&highlight=Armenia>; P. S. Sargsyan, *Istoriya Tserkvi Adventistov Sed'mogo Dnia v Armenii i sredi armian* (n.d., author's personal collection), and D. O. Yunak, *Istoriya Tserkvi*

Adventistov Sed'mogo Dnia v Rossii (1886-2000) (v dvukh tomakh) (Zaokskiy: Istochnik Zhizni, 2002).

4. "Armenian Field," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (2001-2022), <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/>.

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