



South-Central Costa Rica Conference

Photo courtesy of Luis Rubio Montalbán.

# South-Central Costa Rica Conference

## LUIS RUBIO

Luis Rubio Montalban, M.A., now pursuing a doctoral degree in pastoral ministry (Inter-American Adventist Theological Seminary, campus of Adventist University of Central America, Alajuela, Costa Rica), has served the Church for 28 years as a district pastor, high school principal, chaplain, university professor, and administrator of South-Central Costa Rica Conference.

South-Central Costa Rica Conference is an administrative unit that is a part of South Central American Union Mission in Inter-American Division of the Seventh-day Adventists.

South-Central Costa Rica Conference is an administrative unit that is a part of South Central American Union Mission. Its headquarters are located 100 meters east of the roundabout El Farolito, between Street 33 and Avenue 13, No. 3178, Barrio Escalante, San José, Costa Rica. Its activities conform with the model constitution of the Inter-American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Its physical facilities and intellectual property are protected by South Central Costa Rica Conference legal ID 3-002-045622 based in Barrio Escalante, San José, Costa Rica. The South-Central Costa Rica Conference board of directors has transferred several of its functions to institutions that act as administrators for the conference.

The territory of South-Central Costa Rica Conference includes the province of San José, the province of Cartago (except the canton of Turrialba), and the southern part of the province of Puntarenas. The 2018 Annual Statistical Report of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists recorded that South-Central Costa Rica Conference had 81 churches and 20 groups. It had 28,753 members in June 2018.<sup>1</sup> On May 31, 2019, South Central Costa Rica Conference had 12 pastors with ministerial credentials, 10 pastors with ministerial licenses, and five office employees. In June 2019, it had 53 active employees.<sup>2</sup>

## Institutions

Costa Rica Bilingual Adventist Educational Center is located in San José, the capital of the country. It opened as Hatillo School and received authorization for its construction on February 12, 1974. To start the 1975 course, F. Moreira, R. Burgos, F. Santamaría, and D. Wilson were hired as teachers with Rodrigo Burgos as the school's director. On October 14, 1982, a vote was taken to begin construction of a secondary school and finance it through the collaboration of Brother Archie Hamlin, who supported this project and the construction of a gymnasium.<sup>3</sup> As of 2019, it offers preschool, primary, and secondary education.

Paso Canoas Adventist Educational Center is located in the southern part of the country, bordering Panama. It opened as Paso Canoas Adventist School. It began operations in the classrooms of Paso Canoas Adventist Church in 1984. Years later, it was renamed Paso Canoas Adventist Educational Center. In 2002, thanks to support from volunteers from the Maranatha ministry, six classrooms, two offices, a gym, and bathrooms were built.<sup>4</sup> In 2012, a new classroom section was built thanks to a group of NPAA students from the United States led by Brother Eduardo González.<sup>5</sup> As of 2019, it is a high school.

Cartago Adventist Educational Center is located in San Blas de Cartago. It opened as Cartago Adventist School in 1988. Its first teachers were José Retana and Cristina Chaves. Years later, it was renamed Cartago Adventist Educational Center.<sup>6</sup> As of 2019, it is an elementary school.<sup>7</sup>

Esperanza TV Costa Rica is located in San José. In February 2012, the channel was named Advent TV. In March 2013, it was renamed Esperanza TV Costa Rica. In August 2013, it was included in Hope Channel's network and is registered as *TV Producciones Costarricenses Sociedad Anónima*. Its headquarters is in the facilities of South-Central Costa Rica Conference, Barrio Escalante, San José. It is the first channel to broadcast online in Costa Rica

for 24 continuous hours. It transmits from the *Nuevo Tiempo* channel in South America. As of 2019, the signal transmits to 72 cable operators in eight Spanish-speaking countries.<sup>8</sup>

Medical Center *El Farolito Sociedad Anónima* is located in San José. It opened as ADRA Medical Office in June 2007. Its headquarters is located in the facilities of South-Central Costa Rica Conference, Barrio Escalante, San José. It was the first Adventist health institution recognized by the Ministry of Health of Costa Rica. Its first regent was Dr. Candy Romero.<sup>9</sup> In 2011, Doctor Frank Artavia became the director. Years later, it was renamed Medical Center *El Farolito Sociedad Anónima*.<sup>10</sup>

## Origins of Seventh-day Adventist Church in San José, Costa Rica

“The reports in the Review and Herald indicated that by 1906 ... a worker, T. M. Brown, was doing evangelistic work in San José, the capital city” of Costa Rica.<sup>11</sup> When the 1920s started, Colporteur Juan Holder, his wife, and their two children arrived from the Panama Canal area and settled in a small house in Colonia Aranjuez, San José. Every Sabbath, the Holder family held religious services in their home, inviting neighbors and acquaintances to participate. These efforts saw results; soon, the Friddel family joined them.

Juan Holder worked as a door-to-door colporteur for several years. One day, he invited Mr. Friddel to accompany him, and Friddel also became a colporteur. In 1924, Mrs. Holder met Anita Mais de Rodríguez, who wanted to know more about the Bible. Mrs. Holder offered Bible studies, and, months later, Mais de Rodríguez was observing the Sabbath with the new group of believers. At that time, a Pastor Polly was sent to visit the believers and baptized the group, which included members of the Mais de Rodríguez family.<sup>12</sup> In 1931, Pastor N. W. Dunn conducted a campaign in San José. From this campaign, eight people were added to the church. San José now had 52 members.<sup>13</sup>

In the 1940s, the first congregation in San José was established. The congregation met in a rented house near Park Bolivar. They later met in a location 100 meters north and 50 meters west from the post office on Fifth Avenue. In 1947, they moved to a store 50 meters north from Chelles Bar on Calle 9 between Central Avenue and First Avenue.<sup>14</sup>

## Significant Events: Organization of South-Central Costa Rica Conference

In 1928, Costa Rica Mission was established with four churches and 148 members.<sup>15</sup> From 1928-1942, the administrative leaders of Central American Union Mission fulfilled a dual role with the responsibilities of the union mission and of Costa Rica Mission.<sup>16</sup> Starting in 1943, Costa Rica Mission was duly administered by its own administrators. In 1964, the headquarters of the mission moved to Barrio Escalante, the original site of Central American Union Mission.<sup>17</sup>

In 1999, Costa Rica Mission had 83 churches, 25,332 members, and 23 ordained pastors.<sup>18</sup> In 2003, Costa Rica Mission was reorganized into three experimental fields, South Central Mission, North Mission, and Caribbean Mission, with a total of 130 churches and 44,912 members.<sup>19</sup>

Due to the church's growth, cultural differences, and the search for better pastoral care in Costa Rica, it was considered necessary to reorganize three administrative units in the country. In 2005, three administrative units were officially established: Caribbean Costa Rica Mission with 44 churches and 10,214 members, North Costa Rica Mission with 53 churches and 16,196 members, and Central-South Costa Rica Mission with 57 churches and 17,692 members.<sup>20</sup> On January 29, 2006, a vote was taken to officially change Central-South Costa Rica Mission into South Central Costa Rica Conference on May 1, 2006.<sup>21</sup>

## Mission and Strategic Plans

South Central Costa Rica Conference uses the following statements as guidelines for its administrative actions:<sup>22</sup>

Mission: Every disciple of Christ trained and committed to the proclamation of the advent of the Kingdom of God

Vision: Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, each believer a disciple with the purpose of proclaiming the gospel and glorifying God

Values: Prayer, Spirituality, Hope, Commitment, Humbleness, and Spirit of Service

In accordance with the statements above, it is considered necessary to:

1. Increase the coverage of television media available considering that we live in an era of industrial revolution and that all platforms must be used to fulfill the mission.
2. Challenge all members to actively participate in a discipleship program in which everyone uses their gifts for the glory of God and to proclaim the gospel.
3. Motivate each disciple to adopt a healthy lifestyle that testifies about the God we serve.
4. Provide church members with skills and tools constantly to fulfill these ideals.

## List of Presidents

W. E. Baxter (1928-1929); N. W. Dunn (1930-1934); W. E. Baxter (1935); C. P. Crager (1936-1937); A. H. Roth (1938-1939); C. P. Crager (1940-1942); Orley Ford (1943-1945); R. T. Minesinger (1946); Peter Nygaard (1948-1951); L. L. Cook (1952-1953); Richard Utt (1954-1957); C. E. Fillman (1958-1961); O. Santa Cruz (1962-1963); David García Zavaleta (1964-1968); Juan Castillo (1969-1970); Lynn Baerg (1971); Francisco Arroyo (1972-1974); Guillermo

Meléndez (1975-1976); Flavio Villareal (1977-1982); Pablo Perla (1983-1984); Tito Venegas (1985-1986); J. M. Vallejos (1987-1988); Leonel Pottinger (1989-1994); Milton Castillo (1995-1996); Luis González (1997-2001); Eugenio Vallejo (2002-2003); Eddy Bonilla (2004-2006); J. M. Vallejos (2007-2014); Olmedo Martínez (2015- ).

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## NOTES

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2. Employee Record System, Inter-American Division Secretariat archives, Miami, Florida, USA.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. Eduardo González, interview by author, San José, March 19, 2012.
6. Luis Rubio Montalbán, *Los adventistas en Costa Rica...un siglo de avance* (Costa Rica: self-published, 2002), 138.
7. Mauricio Canales, interview by author, San José, June 20, 2019.
8. Daniel Valerín, interview by author, San José, June 29, 2019.
9. Roberto Romero, interview by author, San José, June 30, 2019.
10. South Central Costa Rica Conference office of the secretariat archives.

11. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (1996), s.v. "Costa Rica."
12. Rubio Montalbán, 25.
13. Ibid, 27.
14. Ibid, 30.
15. Ibid, 26.
16. "Central American Union Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1943), 122, accessed 2019, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1943.pdf>.
17. Rubio Montalbán, 68, 71.
18. "Costa Rica Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1999), 132, accessed 2019, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1999.pdf>.
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20. "Caribbean Costa Rica Mission," "North Costa Rica Mission," and "Central-South Costa Rica Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2005), 139-140, accessed 2019, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB2005.pdf>.
21. South Central American Union Conference meeting minutes, May 1, 2006, South Central American Union Mission archives, Alajuela, Costa Rica.
22. Records from the South-Central Costa Rica Conference secretariat archives, San Jose, Costa Rica.

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