

# Ordóñez Withol, Alfredo (1940–2016)

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MIREYA RODRÍGUEZ ORDÓÑEZ

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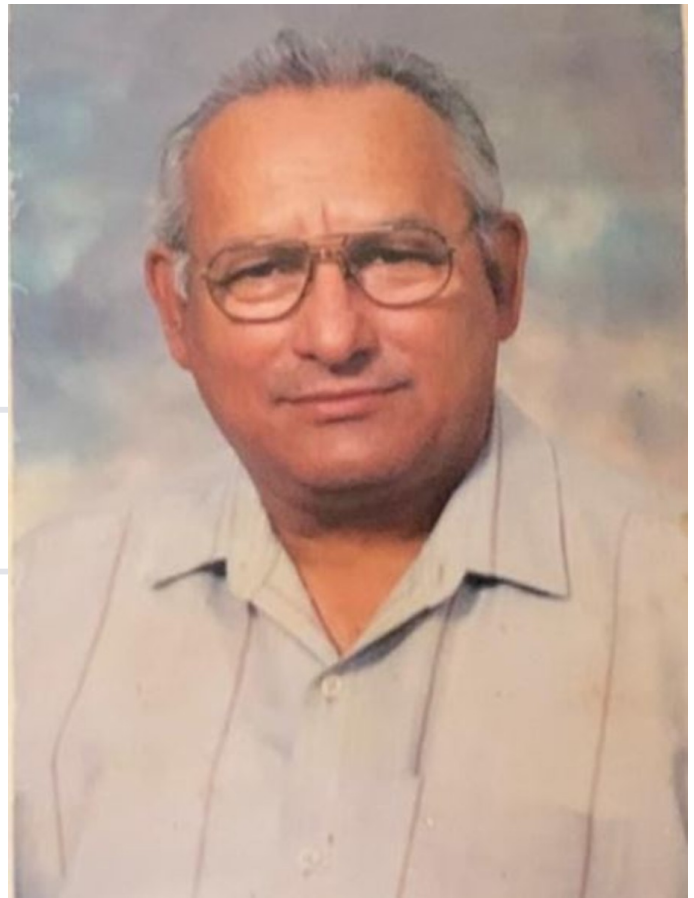
Alfredo Ordóñez Withol dedicated his life to pastoral and teaching ministry in Nicaragua and Honduras.

## Early Years

Alfredo Ordóñez Withol was born July 14, 1940, in the municipality of Iriona, department of Colón, Honduras. His parents were Rubén Ordóñez Streber and Francisca Amalia Withol Escobar. He had ten sisters and four brothers. He spent much of his childhood at his birthplace. At age 12, he was sent to Tegucigalpa, Honduras, to live with his grandmother and then with his stepmother<sup>1</sup>

Alfredo's primary studies were at the School of Men of Central America in Tegucigalpa. Since his childhood he had to work to support himself and, while doing so at a laundromat, he met his adoptive father and mentor, Pastor Peter Wood, who gave him Bible studies and baptized him in 1960. From there he went to the Adventist Educational Center (CEA) Peña Blanca, in Cortés, Honduras, where he studied until the third year of high school, and then he went to COVAC to finish his secondary studies. With much sacrifice, but with dedication and care, he stood out as an excellent student with a tremendous inclination to research. It was providential, rather than by chance, that he met Pastor Wood, because from the very beginning his heart was open to the gospel and the Christian way of life. God was calling him to serve Him throughout his life in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

## Education and Marriage



Alfredo Ordóñez Withol

Photo courtesy of Mireya Rodríguez Ordóñez.

Alfredo's higher education was marked by many sacrifices, but also with great satisfaction. In 1965, when he finished high school at COVAC, he worked as a teacher at the Porteño Adventist College (CAP), in Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua,<sup>2</sup> because he had no money to pursue higher education. At the end of that year, in which he enjoyed teaching at the primary and secondary levels, he had earned enough money to study at COVAC. He arrived determined to enroll in the education course, but when asked if he was going to study theology, he did not hesitate to answer "yes," because he felt the divine call.

During the year that followed he met and became friends with the woman who would be his wife. On November 22, 1968, he married Mireya Estela Rodríguez Botacio, a Panamanian. They were married by civil law in Costa Rica and then married in a church ceremony in Panama City on November 27. Also, in 1968, he obtained his bachelor's degree in theology. After working in the Central American Mission field for several years, he was called to work at his alma mater, and in 1982 he finished the four-year bachelor's degree in theology.

He had the privilege of pursuing postgraduate studies at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, and in 1984 he obtained a master of arts degree in religion, with an emphasis on biblical languages.<sup>3</sup> He studied with a scholarship from Universidad Adventista de Centro America, the Central American Union, and the Inter-American Division. He then studied for a doctoral degree and finished all courses and comprehensive exams.

## Ministry

Pastor Alfredo Ordóñez began his work for the Adventist Church in 1966, when he worked for a year at CAP, Nicaragua, as a teacher. After completing additional education, he returned to the same institution where he worked as a teacher, treasurer, and director, from 1969 to 1971. On the first two summer vacations during those years he pursued university studies in Managua and during the last vacation he oversaw the Bluefields Adventist Church. During that time, he organized a Hispanic group in Puerto Cabezas which grew to become a congregation of about 40 people.

In 1972 he received a call to serve as a secondary education teacher at CEA, where he remained until December 1975. In 1976 he was called to pastor the Finley churches (now Tepeyac) in Tegucigalpa, as well as Comayagüela and the Kennedy Colony, a work that he carried out with love until June of that year when he was transferred to the office of the Honduras Mission to serve as director of the stewardship and Sabbath School departments until May 1978. That same year he was ordained<sup>4</sup> as a pastor and he visited all the fields of the mission, promoting stewardship and Sabbath School by doing seminars for stewardship directors and Sabbath School teachers.

Between June 1979 and December 1980, he was sent to the Bay Islands and La Mosquitia, Honduras. There he also organized a Hispanic group on the Island of Guanaja.<sup>5</sup> For a couple of weeks in January 1981, he was commissioned to update the membership books of the Honduras Mission. Beginning on January 14, 1981, he was called to work as a Bible teacher in the secondary school of the Centro Adventista de Estudios Superiores

(CADES), where he stayed until February 1983. From 1989 until March 1992, he was a professor in the School of Theology. From April 1992 until December 1993, he was the interim director of the School of Theology. From 1994 to 2002 he continued as a professor at the same school.

While working as a teacher, he also preached nearly every Sabbath in various churches in Costa Rica. During his life he wrote numerous articles, mostly unpublished; and several studies related to tithing, Sabbath, and the Trinity, among others. A small book he published in 1993 was entitled *A Structure of Matthew*, whose usefulness lies in providing cognitive and didactic help to understand the Gospel of Matthew and Jesus Christ.

Pastor Alfredo Ordóñez was a member of the NGO, Pan American Health Service Inc., located in Peña Blanca, Cortés, Honduras. While ministering in the former Bay Islands district of Honduras, he not only attended to the spiritual needs of his members, but also helped build the courtyard of the School of Guanaja, and he participated with the former Baptist pastor of Guanaja in organizing recreational activities for the children of the community. His spirit of service led him to enroll as a volunteer firefighter in the communities of Puerto Cabezas and Guanaja.<sup>6</sup>

He actively supported the former group (now church) of La Esperanza, and the Carrillo group in Costa Rica, in which he worked tenaciously to bring them back to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as they had separated for a while. He also worked for another dissident group, helping them to return without neglecting his pastoral responsibility for them. On one occasion, while serving as a professor at the School of Theology, a student accused him of teaching that tithing was not necessary, for which he was questioned by his superiors. After being interviewed and investigated, it was found that not only had the student misunderstood the teaching, but that Pastor Ordóñez gave 33 percent of his salary as tithe.

## Later Years

Pastor Ordóñez began his retirement on November 1, 2002,<sup>7</sup> although it was not his wish. He continued teaching at the Universidad Adventista de Centro America (UNADECA) School of Theology and, at the same time, preaching the gospel in the churches that invited him, especially his beloved group of Carrillo and the English group that meets at the facilities of the Food Factory (CETEBEDI) of the Inter-American Division on the UNADECA campus.

Pastor Alfredo Ordóñez Withol died July 6, 2016, at his home in Alajuela, Costa Rica, surrounded by the family and friends he so much enjoyed.

Pastor Alfredo Ordóñez Withol was an active member in the society where he lived and to which he provided support in all types of philanthropic activity. Pastor Ordóñez undoubtedly left indelible marks on many who knew him, inside and outside the Church.

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## SOURCES

South Central American Union Secretariat Report. Employee Service Record. 1966. Accessed May 25, 2020. Secretariat archives. Alajuela, Costa Rica.

South Central American Union Mission yearend plenary session minutes. 331-2002. 145. November 12, 2002. Accessed May 25, 2020. Secretariat archives. Alajuela, Costa Rica.

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## NOTES

1. Elena Ordóñez Dilworth, pastor Ordóñez's sister, interview by author, Alajuela, Costa Rica, June 20, 2019.
2. South Central American Union Mission Secretariat Report, "Employee Service Record," 1966, accessed May 25, 2020, secretariat archives.
3. Ibid.
4. South Central American Union Mission Secretariat Report, Employee Service Record, 1966, accessed May 25, 2020, Secretariat archives.
5. Alfredo C. Ordóñez Rodríguez, pastor Ordóñez's son, interview by author, Alajuela, Costa Rica, July 12, 2019.
6. Ibid.
7. South Central American Union Mission yearend plenary session, 331-2002, 145, November 12, 2002, accessed May 25, 2020, Secretariat archives.

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