



The New Zealand Pacific Union Conference administrative headquarters in Auckland, New Zealand.

Photo courtesy of Maheata Adeline.

# New Zealand Pacific Union Conference, South Pacific Division

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## BARRY OLIVER

Barry Oliver, Ph.D., retired in 2015 as president of the South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists, Sydney, Australia. An Australian by birth Oliver has served the Church as a pastor, evangelist, college teacher, and administrator. In retirement, he is a conjoint associate professor at Avondale College of Higher Education. He has authored over 106 significant publications and 192 magazine articles. He is married to Julie with three adult sons and three grandchildren.

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The New Zealand Pacific Union Conference is a constituent union of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and is one of four unions in the South Pacific Division of the General Conference.<sup>1</sup>

## Current Territory and Statistics

The territory of the New Zealand Pacific Union Conference (NZPUC) is “Cook Islands, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Pitcairn Island, and Wallis and Futuna Islands; comprising the North New Zealand, and South New Zealand Conferences; the Cook Islands, French Polynesia, and New Caledonia Missions; and the Pitcairn Island Field Station.”<sup>2</sup> The NZPUC headquarters is located at 18 Fencible Drive, Howick, Auckland, New Zealand. The postal address is Private Bag 94200, Howick, Auckland, 2145, New Zealand.

The unincorporated activities of the NZPUC are governed by a constitution that is based on the model union conference constitution of the South Pacific Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (SPD). Its real property is held in trust by the Seventh-day Adventist Church Property Trustee (NZ) Ltd., an incorporated entity based at the headquarters office of the union in Howick and placed on the New Zealand Companies office register on April 28, 2004.<sup>3</sup> Its intellectual property is held in trust by Australasian Conference Association Limited, an incorporated entity based at the headquarters office of the SPD in Wahroonga, New South Wales, Australia. New Zealand Seventh-day Adventist Schools Association Limited is an incorporated entity that was incorporated on December 11, 1992, to hold the title for school properties of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in New Zealand. It is the entity that the Government of New Zealand recognizes for the payment of grants to Seventh-day Adventist schools in New Zealand.<sup>4</sup>

In the *2019 Annual Statistical Report of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists* the New Zealand Pacific Union Conference was listed as having two constituent conferences, three missions, and one field station, which, in turn, had a total of 148 church congregations and 49 companies.<sup>5</sup> Church membership at the end of 2018 was 20,622.<sup>6</sup> In the *2018 Annual Statistical Report of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists* the union had a total of 255 active employees in its entities. The total tithe receipts for the union in 2016 were US\$12,640,796. Its tithe and offerings per capita were US\$1,288.13.<sup>7</sup>

## Institutions and Services of the New Zealand Pacific Union Conference

Longburn Adventist College is located at 100 Walkers Road, RD7, Palmerston North, New Zealand. The college opened its doors in 1908 as the Pukekura Training School at Cambridge. In November 1912, it was transferred to the present site, and work was commenced on buildings.<sup>8</sup> It was known then as the Oroua Missionary College. Joseph Mills, the newly appointed principal, transferred from the Pukekura School in December 1912 and, with his wife, lived in a tent on the estate while the buildings were being erected.<sup>9</sup> The new school was dedicated on April 30, 1913.<sup>10</sup> Since its founding, the college has been variously known as the Pukekura Training School (Cambridge), 1908–1912; the Oroua Missionary College, 1913–1923; the New Zealand Missionary College, 1924–1966; Longburn College, 1967–1985; and Longburn Adventist College, 1986–present.<sup>11</sup> It operates as a Year 7–13 day and boarding school.<sup>12</sup> In 2017, the enrollment was 239, including both day and boarding students.<sup>13</sup>

Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) New Zealand is located at 124 Pah Road, Royal Oak, Auckland 1023, New Zealand. In 1994, the North New Zealand Conference established ADRA New Zealand as a trust.<sup>14</sup> It was registered as of April 1, 1995,<sup>15</sup> as the first official development agency under the New Zealand Charitable Societies Act,<sup>16</sup> which enabled it to accept tax-deductible donations for overseas development/emergency assistance grants from the New Zealand Government.

Hope Channel is broadcast free-to-air in New Zealand as a component of the comprehensive media strategy of the union. The manager is located in the union office, while technical and production staff are located in an office in Napier, New Zealand.<sup>17</sup>

## Organizational History

The New Zealand Pacific Union Conference came into existence in 2000. However, the territory of the union had experienced a number of reorganizations since the Seventh-day Adventist Church established itself in the South Pacific region in 1885.

An Australasian Union Conference was organized during the time of the January 15–25, 1894, Australian camp-meeting. It comprised District No. 7 of the General Conference districts and included the conferences of Australia and New Zealand. It was, in fact, the first union conference organized in the global Seventh-day Adventist Church. The stated object of the union was “to unify and extend the work of the third angel’s message, under the general direction of the General Conference, in the Australasian field.”<sup>18</sup>

Until 1949, the Australasian Union Conference, also designated as the Australasian Division, operated as a collection of conferences and missions, including all of the entities now forming the New Zealand Pacific Union Conference.<sup>19</sup> In 1949, four unions were organized within the territory of the division, which was renamed the Australasian Inter-Union Conference:<sup>20</sup> “1. Central Pacific Union Mission with headquarters in Suva, Fiji; 2. Coral Sea Union Mission with headquarters in Lae, Papua New Guinea; 3. Trans-Commonwealth Union Conference with headquarters in Melbourne, Victoria; and 4. Trans-Tasman Union Conference with headquarters in Gordon, New South Wales.”<sup>21</sup>

The South New Zealand Conference and the North New Zealand Conference were part of the Trans-Tasman Union Conference. French Polynesia, the Cook Islands, New Caledonia, and Pitcairn were all part of the Central Pacific Union Mission.<sup>22</sup>

By 1953 it was decided that the territory of the Coral Sea Union Mission “would be better developed by being formed into two Union territories. The result was that the Bismarck-Solomons Union Mission came into being with headquarters at Rabaul.” This meant that there were now five unions in the Australasian Division.<sup>23</sup> Then, at the end of 1971, the division’s mission territories were reorganized. Three of the five unions were designated as union missions: 1) Papua New Guinea Union Mission with headquarters in Lae, Papua New Guinea; 2) Western

Pacific Union Mission with headquarters in Honiara, British Solomon Islands; and 3) Central Pacific Union Mission with headquarters in Suva, Fiji. The reorganization into the new Unions became effective April 1, 1972.<sup>24</sup>

In December 1972, an action was taken to transfer the headquarters of the new Central Pacific Union Mission to Auckland, New Zealand, from Suva, Fiji.<sup>25</sup> The Central Pacific Union Mission did not include the conferences in New Zealand, but for a number of reasons, it was deemed more efficient to administer the local missions of the Central Pacific Union from Auckland rather than from Suva.<sup>26</sup> The transfer of the union headquarters was complete by January 1974. Meanwhile, the territories of the Trans-Tasman Union and the Trans Commonwealth Union remained the same throughout the period 1949–2000.

In 2000 a further major reorganization of the unions in the South Pacific Division occurred at the division session.<sup>27</sup> The number of unions in the division was reduced from five to four. The New Zealand Pacific Union Conference came into existence in this reorganization. The action of the South Pacific Division Session on October 31, 2000, called for the creation of a New Zealand Pacific Union Conference, which would comprise the North New Zealand Conference, South New Zealand Conference, French Polynesia Mission, New Caledonia Mission, Cook Islands Mission, and Pitcairn Island Church. It further stated that this new organizational structure would be effective January 1, 2001.<sup>28</sup>

Following the reorganization, the headquarters of the NZPUC was established in the conference office of the North New Zealand Conference.<sup>29</sup> Some experimentation with the distribution of departmental responsibilities was attempted and resulted in the sharing of roles across the union and conference teams.<sup>30</sup> The union purchased the present headquarters building on December 15, 2011.<sup>31</sup>

## Mission and Strategic Plans of the New Zealand Pacific Union Conference

The Union Mission Statement:

The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to call all people to become disciples of Jesus Christ, to proclaim the everlasting gospel embraced by the three angels' messages (Revelation 14:6–12), and to prepare the world for Christ's soon return. Guided by the Bible and the Holy Spirit, Seventh-day Adventists pursue this mission through Christ-like living, communicating, discipling, teaching, healing and serving.<sup>32</sup>

The New Zealand Pacific Union Conference is fulfilling its mission by:<sup>33</sup>

- a. Discipling every member
- b. Taking the gospel to every home

- c. Ensuring that every church is a center of influence
- d. Promoting our major themes: Discipleship, Comprehensive Health, Comprehensive Media, and Mission to our Communities

The union experienced a recent success when Hope Channel NZ began broadcasting via satellite on September 12, 2015, and via terrestrial on May 1, 2016.<sup>34</sup> According to Nelson unique viewer numbers, Hope Channel has had a high point of over 200,000 viewers each month.

A challenge remaining for the union is increasing secularization. New Zealand in particular is becoming increasingly secular. According to the 2017 NZ Bible Society survey of Christians in New Zealand, only 12 percent of the population attends church regularly.

## Executive Officers

Presidents: Allan Walshe (2000–2005);<sup>35</sup> Jerry Matthews (2005–2013);<sup>36</sup> Bradley Kemp (2013–2018);<sup>37</sup> Eddie Tupa'i (2018–)<sup>38</sup>

Secretary-treasurers: Warrick Long (2000–2005); Peter Lynch (2005–2010); Graeme Drinkall (2010–)

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4. Graeme Drinkall, e-mail to author, March 4, 2019.
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