



Facade of Central Parana Conference, 2016.

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Central Parana Conference

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Central Parana Conference (ACP) is an administrative unit of the Seventh-day Adventist Church located in the territory of South Brazil Union Conference (USB). Its headquarters is currently at Deputado João Ferreira Neves Av., nº 159, Vista Alegre district, ZIP code 80820-380, in the city of Curitiba, capital of the state of Parana, Brazil!

This conference covers 82 towns of the metropolitan region of Curitiba, and of the central and northern regions of Parana. Its collaborators' team is responsible for meeting 25,246 members (quantity regarding 2017), divided into 43 pastoral districts and 231 congregations (among churches and organized groups). The total population of the territory covered by ACP is 3,493,782, or one Adventist for every 138 inhabitants in the territory. To meet the needs of such a broad field, the conference has 734 employee workers, including 55 ordained ministers and 11 licensed ones?

In the city of Curitiba, the educational institutions maintained by the ACP are Boa Vista Adventist Academy, with 851 students; Boqueirão Adventist Academy, with 1,149 students; Portão Adventist Academy, with 1,114 students; Vista Alegre Adventist Academy, with 140 students; and Santa Efigenia Adventist Academy, with 411 students. ACP also holds Araucaria Adventist Academy, in the city of Araucaria, with 621 students; Castro Adventist Academy, in Castro, with 154 students; Guarapuava Adventist Academy, Guarapuava, with 364 students; Ponta Grossa Adventist Academy, in Ponta Grossa, with 406 students; and Telemaco Borba Adventist Academy, in Telemaco Borba, with

472 students. In total 5,682 students are spread among these units.³

Included under the management of ACP is Jardim Pinheiros Home for Girls, located in Padre José Martini St., in the district of Santa Felicidade, in Curitiba. In accordance with the Brazilian Child and Adolescent Statute envisaged in Brazilian legislation, this home for girls accepts girls in the two-seven year old age group, sent by the Guardianship Councils – Juvenile Court Children and Youth Legal Service. In its environment, the institution offers a welcoming Christian service with a healthy diet, schooling, medical and dental care, and all the conditions for a decent life.⁴

The Central Parana Conference field is also reached through the signal of Brazil Adventist Media Center - estimating an audience that exceeds the mark of two million people.⁵

Origin of the Adventist Work in the Conference Territory

In January 1896, Albert B. Stauffer, canvasser, arrived in Curitiba. Stauffer and other canvassers planned to sell literature and plant the seeds of the Seventh-day Adventist message in the lands of Parana. In one of their first contacts, these canvassers sold the book *Cristus unser Heiland* (Story of Jesus - German edition, published in Hamburg), by Ellen G. White. This was the first Adventist book to be sold in the state of Parana. Mrs. Anna Piedrich Otto, the city's most well-known midwife, purchased the book.⁶

After a long night of studying, on the following Sunday, Anna Piedrich and her husband, Oscar Emílio Otto, accepted the Adventist faith. They became the first converts in the state of Parana.⁷ On the Sabbath of that same week, January 18, 1896, the first Sabbath School in the state was conducted - a meeting held in the Ottos' own living room.⁸ Anna was baptized the same year by Pastor Frank Henry Westphal. Westphal was the first ordained Adventist minister to step onto Brazilian soil.⁹

Earlier that year, Pastor Huldreich von Graf arrived in Curitiba. He was the first Adventist pastor to be sent to Brazil by the General Conference (at the time still based in Battle Creek). He and his family resided at Paula Gomes St., nº 290 and shortly afterward conducted evangelistic meetings. Soon the Adventist academy (known as International Academy, founded on July 1, 1896) was opened and the first converts were baptized.¹⁰ The success of the missionary efforts of two canvasser couples, Guilherme and Maria Stein (teachers at the Academy), and the Graf couple, ensured that in the following year, January 1897, the first Adventist church in Parana (now known as Central Seventh-day Adventist Church of Curitiba) was organized.¹¹

In 1898, also in Curitiba, the first meeting (assembly) took place in a rented house on Paula Gomes St. (which served as a residence for the Graf and Stein families, and as a church and academy), with all the workers in Brazil - less than a dozen of them, including pastors, teachers, and canvassers. Interestingly, this building still exists more than a hundred years later.¹²

Until 1905 the advancement of the Adventist work in the state of Paraná (and throughout Brazil) was managed by the Brazil Conference, with its headquarters in the city of Rio de Janeiro. This conference had been formed in 1902 under the leadership of H. F. Graf as president, and A. B. Stauffer as secretary/treasurer.¹³ However, in 1906, Brazil Conference was reorganized, giving rise to four new administrative units in the Brazilian territory: Rio Grande do Sul Conference, Santa Catarina-Parana Conference, North Brazil Mission, and São Paulo Mission. Therefore, Adventists in Parana were assisted by Santa Catarina-Parana Conference leadership.¹⁴

In 1910, Parana Conference was organized and directed by Pastor Jacob G. Kroeker. Thereafter, the state of Parana set up its own administrative headquarters which specifically answered for this region of Brazil.¹⁵ This institution came to be called Parana Mission in 1914. Subsequently, on January 20, 1915, the church to be used for church meetings in Curitiba and as headquarters for Parana Mission was opened - the first Adventist church in Curitiba, erected at Saldanha Marinho St., nº 1110. The construction was led by Guilherme Malsbendem (architect and builder), and the painting was done by Otto Weber's brother - the two Adventists from Germany who had come with their families to Brazil in 1913.¹⁶

Years later, in 1921, the first board of the Volunteer Missionaries League (now known as the Adventist Youth Society) was organized. The director of the league at the time was Emilio Doehnert and Martha R. Doehnert, secretary. Frederico Kümpel was the first Seventh-day Adventist church pastor assigned to Curitiba, who after a few years gave his place to Pastor Alberto Hägen, and later, to Pastor Henrique Stöehr. Prior to the arrival of Pastor Kümpel, the church was assisted by pastors and workers of Parana Mission.¹⁷ At the time there were already two groups of Adventists in Curitiba: one that spoke German and the other Portuguese. Thus, two worship sessions were held on Sabbaths: one in the morning for German speakers and the other in the afternoon for Portuguese speakers.¹⁸

Regarding the Adventist work movement in the state of Parana, in 1927 there was an administrative reorganization by which congregations in the states of Parana and Santa Catarina joined together to form the "Seventh-day Adventist Santa Catarina-Parana Mission." The meeting to formalize such a decision was led by Pastors G. W. Schubert (representing the General Conference) and Niels P. Nielsen (from South Brazil Union Conference).¹⁹

Subsequently, due to the increase in membership, the Saldanha Marino Street building became too small to house the church service meetings. Thus, it was necessary to build a new physical space for such meetings. The new church building was then opened on January 25, 1935. It was built at Dr. Ermelino de Leo St., nº. 170, and its construction was also led by the architect and builder Guilherme Malsbendem. The first baptism to take place in this new building was held on the opening night, when Edith Anniess, Izabel Braga, and Wolfgang Weber were baptized.²⁰

In the early 1940s, the first Adventist radio program was broadcast nationwide - called Moments of Meditation - in the state of Paraná. This program was transmitted through P.R.B.2. radio, and its first speaker was Pastor Durval Stockler de Lima (who was also the program founder). The Adventist work continued to progress in Parana territory, and during that decade a series of evangelistic conferences were held in the capital, in São Braz neighborhood - during which there were several other baptisms.²¹

Soon the building on Dr. Ermelino de Leão Street was no longer able to accommodate all the church members during the worship meetings held there. Therefore, in 1952, the first reorganization of the church in Curitiba was conducted. At the time, Juvevê Seventh-day Adventist Church was established. However, the high growth in membership in the late 1950s required another reorganization. Thus, a group was organized in Vista Alegre neighborhood, as a good number of church members lived there.²²

The first Pathfinders Club²³ of Central Curitiba Church was organized in 1962. This club was named Pinheirais and its activities started in 1963. In October of that same year the meeting place for members of Central Curitiba Church was moved to a new address at Carlos de Carvalho St., nº 400. The official opening of this new church took place on December 24, 1966, and the ceremony of dedication was carried out on December 5, 1968, because members were awaiting the visit of Pastor Roberto Pierson, President of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.²⁴

On March 26, 1971, Telepaz-Curitiba was inaugurated. The service offered in this project was sought daily by over 1,000 people. A recorded message lasting 2-3 minutes would play as soon as the phones rang, and if the caller needed help, he could talk after the recording was over and someone would pick up the call. The person could request a visit or a personal interview at the church headquarters. This was the first project of its kind to be carried out in Brazilian territory. Its headquarters was at Central Curitiba Church.²⁵

Central Curitiba Church was the largest Brazilian Adventist church at the time, with a seating capacity of 1,500 people. In addition, a hall for youth had a seating capacity of 700 people. At the time there were a total of seven congregations in that city.²⁶ Nevertheless, 10 years later, a new demand for space was felt by church members in Curitiba. This led to the organization of a youth church with the participation of at least 110 young people. Membership in this new church continued to grow to the point that about a decade later, in 1989, the Young Church won its own building at Curitiba Adventist College, located at Nilo Peçanha St., nº 501. This new building had the capacity to accommodate 500 people.²⁷

The above journey shows that missionary zeal and enthusiasm, driven by divine action, led Adventist pioneers on Brazilian soil to firmly and gradually organize the Adventist church in an intentional and well-structured manner. Missions and conferences soon emerged in the three states of southern Brazil. In 1989, in the state of Paraná alone, there were already two conferences: South Parana Conference (ASP) and North Parana Conference (ANP). The establishment of these two new conferences triggered exponential growth in both the northern and southern regions of the state. Such growth resulted in an increase in the number of members and pastoral districts in the territory.²⁸

Nearly a decade later, in 2000, the number of members in the conferences was about 52,819 people. The number of organized churches in the two territories had already exceeded the mark of 250 congregations - not including the organized groups. The growth was so large in Parana territory that it was necessary to create a new conference to better attend to the membership of that region.²⁹

Conference Organizational History

In 2008, three historical votes were taken, respectively, by the North Parana Conference, vote no. 2008-142; South Parana Conference, vote no. 2008-144-3; and South Brazil Union Conference, vote no. 2008-099. Through these deliberations, the South American Division (SAD) was requested to reorganize the territory of Parana to form a new conference in order to better serve the churches and encourage the fulfillment of the mission. The South American Division appointed a survey committee, according to SAD vote no. 2009-008, in order to study the project for the creation of a new conference in the USB territory.³⁰

The meeting of that board took place at 9 a.m. on February 12, 2009, on the premises of USB, located at João Carlos de Souza Castro St., nº 562, Guabirota district, in Curitiba, Parana. SAD administrators included: Pastors Erton Köhler and Marino J. de Oliveira from USB; Pastors Ignácio L. Kalbermatter, Valdilho Quadrado, and Davi Contri from ANP; Pastors Ronaldo Bertazzo, Elieser C. Vargas, and Mr. João A. Rodrigues from ASP; Pastors Antonio A. G. Moreira, Stanley E. Arco, and Mr. Uilson Garcia, district pastors; Josias F. da Fonseca and Gilson Grütner; and lay members Mr. Ademar Reis and Mr. Neudo Ribeiro Bueno.³¹

To evaluate the initiative of building the new field, certain considerations were discussed: the growth of South Parana Conference - with 39,413 members spread in 365 congregations and 68 pastoral districts; the concomitant growth of North Parana Conference; extension of the territory; and the difficulties of meeting the congregations' needs, since there were still 39 towns without an Adventist presence. In this context, the need for boosting the process of preaching the gospel in the region was perceived, as well as optimizing the financial growth and balance of South Parana Conference.³²

At the same meeting held on February 12, 2009, after analyzing the survey and studies made, the viability to create the new mission field was agreed, and it was established that the new administrative headquarters would be called South Parana Conference, and that the former headquarters would henceforth be called Central Parana Conference.

Thus, the creation of ACP was recommended and subsequently authorized in assembly, being held responsible for assisting about 21,551 members, organized in 108 churches located in the central part of the state of Paraná. The office of ACP was then established at Deputado João Ferreira Neves Street, 159 in Vista Alegre neighborhood, Curitiba, capital of the state of Paraná - where it remains today.³³

ACP began operations on January 1, 2010.³⁴ From then on, the missionary progress reached in its field has been remarkable. This includes the opening of five new districts in recent years, the annual training and empowerment of some 7,000 church members, and 22 district offices which were reopened with investments in the sum of US\$ 3,990,210.68.³⁵

Between 2011 and 2015, 68 churches were opened in the region covered by ACP. In 2015, US\$ 1,054,479.68 were invested in the construction and architecture to upgrade 18 new churches in the territory. According to Laudecir Miotto Mazzo, the then treasurer of the conference, "the dream is to have our churches prettier and more functional than our own houses, for the house of God must dignify His name." Some of the churches inaugurated at the time were: Mount Castelo Seventh-day Adventist Church, in the city of Colombo; Inácio Martins Seventh-day Adventist Church, in Inácio Martins; São João district Seventh-day Adventist Church, in Irati; and Araucária Seventh-day Adventist Church, in Araucária.³⁶

Since the conference's work began, ACP members have been involved in projects led by the South American Division. Examples of this are Breaking the Silence,³⁷ Caleb Mission,³⁸ and Impacto Esperança [Hope Impact] projects.³⁹ In 2015, as well as in other locations, Breaking the Silence Project was launched in Cianorte, a city known nationally as the garment capital - because of the hundreds of garment factories there. During the project, a Health Expo was held (a preventive health fair with free attendance) and more than 1,500 newsletters on prevention against abuse and domestic violence were delivered.⁴⁰

In early 2018, more than 2,700 Adventist adolescents and youth from central Paraná participated in the Caleb Mission project. Throughout the south of the country, about 20,000 young people were able to participate in this missionary mobilization and around the country, approximately 64,200 participants were involved in the project. During their involvement in this project, the adolescents and young participants were able to carry out various social actions in central Paraná territory. Some of these actions included setting up an organic garden in the residences of the town of Itaperuçu, in the countryside of the state; holding a healthy vegetarian food tasting fair in Curitiba; visiting the families of the region; and making dengue prevention and combat effort⁴¹ in the industrial city of Curitiba region, among others.⁴²

In 2019, Hope Impact project took place on a Saturday, May 25, and Adventists throughout South America were able to actively participate in the evangelization process through the distribution of missionary books. Similarly in southern Brazil, in the states of Santa Catarina, Rio Grande do Sul, and Paraná alone, about 3 million books were delivered to residents. The printout distributed was the book "Esperança para a Família: caminho para um final feliz" [Hope for the Family: A Way to a Happy Ending], by authors Willie and Elaine Oliver.⁴³

With the involvement and commitment of leaders and members, the growth of the work has advanced in ACP missionary territory. This is because leaders have understood the need to approach their followers and to know their difficulties and needs in order to accompany and support them more closely. In addition, the growth of ACP is also due to the fact that committed people devoted their time and talent to preaching the gospel intensively. It is also important to note that Adventist education has received significant investments for growth. The main purpose is to further expand the school network so that more people can have contact with the message of salvation.⁴⁴

In the 10 years of ACP's existence, there have been many challenges. However, the blessings received have been greater. Examples of such blessings include the setting up of churches in global mission cities where Pathfinder clubs are actively operating and the opening of an influence center that has made a difference in the community where it has been established and delivered results in the baptism of six people. However, while the blessings are being harvested, many challenges remain to be overcome.⁴⁵

The goal of the ACP leadership team is to plant Adventist churches in cities that do not yet have an Adventist presence. In Adventist education, the goal is to expand units and thus receive more students - so that it is possible to educate to save children and youth in a way that they have the desire to walk with Christ. In the current context, the economic and social scenario is quite challenging. Therefore, all efforts will be directed toward achieving missionary goals.⁴⁶

In this regard, it is also intended to strengthen and inspire members to commit even more to the Sabbath School so that it is an extension of Christ to meet the needs of the surrounding community. An active Sabbath School Action Unit generates active members, and this movement attracts the attention of the community so that people in the neighborhood begin to be interested in being part of this group that makes a difference in society.⁴⁷

This movement has already taken place in the territory of this conference and through the Projeto Maná [Manna Project]⁴⁸ initiatives there is a search to further expand the involvement of the faithful so that this commitment grows and bears fruit in the lives of the participants. Another goal is to increase the number of churches in order to fulfill the mission of preaching the gospel to every people and nation. To this end, the plan is to encourage member faithfulness in the return of tithes and offerings so that each member understands that their role is to bless others, enabling the gospel to go forward for the salvation of people.⁴⁹

For the same purpose, the "Cada Um Salvando Um" [Each One Saving One] project has been developed with ACP

congregations, which aims to emphasize the value and role of people in winning others to Christ. The emphasis has been on discipleship among members - especially new converts, so that they may be committed and fruitful in carrying out the evangelic mission. Thus more members will be involved in communion, relationship, and mission.⁵⁰

Chronology of Administrative Executives¹

Presidents: Antônio Alberto G. Moreira (2010-2011); Lourival Gomes de Souza (2011-).

Secretaries: Marcelo Ferreira Cardoso (2010-2011); Paulo Cesar Machado da Rosa (2012-).

Treasurers: Laudecir Miotto Mazzo (2010-2017); Ilton Cesar Hübner (2018-).⁵²

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NOTES

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2. Paulo Machado, email message to Renato Gross, April 12, 2016.?

3. Paulo Machado, email message to Renato Gross, November 12, 2017.?

4. Ibid.?

5. Ibid.?

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7. João Maria de Souza Cancélla, "A Igreja Adventista do Sétimo Dia Central de Curitiba Paraná" [Seventh-day Adventist Central Curitiba Church, Parana] (Monography, Brazil College, 1985), 4.?
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19. N. P. Neilsen, "Santa Catharina Conference," *Revista Mensal* [Monthly Review] 22, no. 5 (May 1927): 10.?
20. R. Doehnert and Esther Adler Doehnert, *A mensagem do advento em Curitiba* [The advent message in Curitiba] (Curitiba, PR: Bom Retiro Adventist Academy, 2002), 16-19.?
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37. "Breaking the Silence is an educative and preventive project against domestic abuse and violence annually fostered by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in eight countries of South America, (Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay) since 2002." Accessed on October 9, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2HFxj8K>.?
38. "Caleb Mission Project is a volunteer program, social service and testimonies that challenge Adventist youth to devote their vacations to evangelism in places where there is no Adventist presence, to empower small congregations, and to bring new people to the kingdom of God." Accessed on October 9, 2019, <http://bit.ly/2HRpvRi>.?
39. "Hope Impact is a program that motivates reading and provides the annual mass distribution of books on the Seventh-day Adventists part in the whole South American territory." Accessed on October 9, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2WZNdzY>.?
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48. "O projeto maná é um esforço unido da Igreja para alcançar o maior número de pessoas de todas as idades com a Lição da Escola Sabatina e motivá-las no estudo diário da Palavra de Deus" [Manna Project is a united endeavor of the Church to reach a greater number of people of all ages with the Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, and motivate them in the daily study of the Word of God]. Accessed in October 9, 2019, <http://bit.ly/2XXpYGu>.?
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50. Ibid.?
51. "Central Parana Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Hagerstown, MD.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2011), 302-303; "Central Parana Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Nampa, ID.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2018), 252. See also *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbooks* from 2011 to 2018.?
52. Information about Central Parana Conference is available on the website: asp.org.br, or on social media – Facebook: @centralparanaense, Twitter: @iasdacp, and Youtube: Associação Central Paranaense [Central Parana Conference].?